

Disability NOW

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winning
newspaper
for everyone
with an interest
in disability

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Vic Finkelstein

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Yes to wheelchair voucher scheme

Disabled people will be able to get powered indoor/outdoor wheelchairs and vouchers to buy manual wheelchairs on the National Health Service from April.

The Government announced the £50 million scheme in February. Up to now, indoor/outdoor wheelchairs have only been available on the NHS in Scotland.

Announcing the change of heart, Health Minister John Bowis said: "This is an exciting day for wheelchair users."

In its first year, £6 million will be given to NHS wheelchair centres to buy powered wheelchairs. The voucher scheme, meanwhile, will enable disabled people to buy manual wheelchairs from the private sector.

Currently a disabled person is assessed by an occupational therapist to see if they are eligible

for a manual NHS wheelchair. If not, they have to pay the full cost themselves. Under the new scheme, disabled people will have the option to be re-assessed and a voucher provided towards the chair's cost.

This will be equal to the cost of a standard NHS wheelchair, usually about £120. If the chair is more expensive than this, the difference will be met by the user.

The scheme is the culmination of a long campaign by a consortium of charities, co-ordinated by the Muscular Dystrophy Group (MDG), under the banner "Batteries not Included".

In 1986, a report by long-term

campaigner Lord McColl recommended to Parliament that a voucher scheme be introduced.

But not everyone is happy. It has emerged that the scheme will not apply to users in Wales and Northern Ireland, angering groups there. And Peter Mansell, chief executive of the Spinal Injuries Association, has warned that severely disabled people could lose out. The cost of a voucher would be nowhere near the amount, anything up to £2,000, they might need for a suitable wheelchair.

"Once again, it just penalises those who are financially worse

Continued on page 2



Our man Dan: complete with spring flowers, Dan Batten gets ready for a special date. More fashion, pages 18-19.

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Details, page 29.

SEN hearings 'adversarial'

Appeals by parents to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal (SENT) need to be dealt with in a less adversarial way and clearer guidance should be given to co-ordinators.

This was the finding of the Commons' All-Party Education Committee's report into the SENT, published on 13 March.

Committee chairman Sir Malcolm Thornton said the tribunal, which hears appeals against local authority decisions on schooling for disabled children, risked being hijacked by the legal profession. This held up proceedings, cost local authorities money and was not helpful to the child.

"We need to avoid the adver-
Continued on page 2

FRONT PAGE PICTURE: JOHN O'REILLY/
SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE NEWS AGENCY
INCONTINENCE PICTURE: BRIAN ALDRICH
FITNESS PICTURE: HUW EVANS

An eye expert is warning contact lens wearers not to rinse contact lens containers with cold water from bathroom taps as they could risk severe eye damage.

The warning is the latest in a string of alerts caused by the infectious micro-organism acanthamoeba keratitis, which can cause severe damage to the eyes, often requiring operations. In an on-going study of the bug at London's Moorfields Eye Hospital, two out of 19 cases have been linked to cold tank-fed tap water.

There is an unusually high incidence of the bug in the UK.

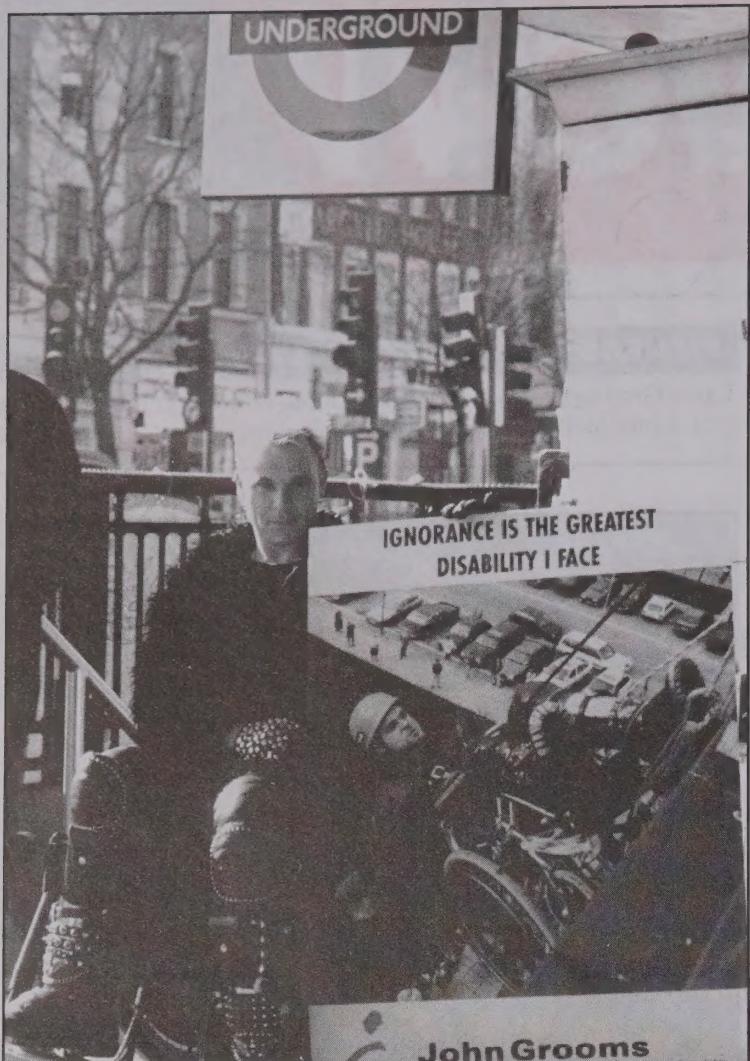
"The UK is almost unique in having storage tanks in houses

supplying every tap in the house except for the kitchen cold tap," said Mr Trevor Gray, cornea and external disease fellow at the hospital.

"We have found a very disturbing association of growth of acanthamoeba in the taps that are supplied by storage tanks. The highest risk tap in the house is the bathroom cold tap where most people rinse out their contact lens case."

Previous alerts have been issued to people using no cleaning solution or chlorine-based cleaning solutions, since they do not kill the microbe, and those using disposable lenses.

Continued on page 2



John Grooms

Ignorance is not bliss: musician, DJ, and *DN* reviewer Mik Scarlet launched a poster campaign for the charity John Grooms in February. The posters, of Mik abseiling down the Central Exchange in Milton Keynes, were displayed in London tube stations from 1 March.

Cheshire wins Tourism for All

Tourism for All, the initiative to improve services and facilities for disabled holidaymakers, again secured a slot in the England for Excellence Awards, run by the English Tourist Board.

This year's winner was Cheshire County Council. Runners-up

were Shrewsbury Quest, which gives people with mobility and sensory disabilities the chance to experience medieval life at Shrewsbury Abbey, and Smallcombe Farm, Colyton, Devon.

Advertising agency Gould & Portmans was the sponsor.

Council shake-up fears

DN exclusive

Services for disabled people may suffer when councils are split into unitary authorities on 1 April.

Councils in Avon, Cleveland, Humberside and parts of North Yorkshire will be split into unitary authorities. All Scottish and most Welsh councils will also become or remain unitary, but there will be no change in Northern Ireland.

The worry is that services will be lost, overlooked or simply forgotten about in the changeover.

In Cleveland, Craig Duerden, officer for people with disabilities, will transfer to Redcar & Cleveland District Council. Unless the other districts buy his services, he will no longer cover the whole county.

His duties will cover wider equality issues, depriving him of the time to deal with matters arising from the Disability Discrimination Act.

"At a time when there are massive changes in the legislative base, we are losing a particular degree of specialism," said his boss, equal opportunities officer John Harbour.

Mr Harbour believes community care provision may be damaged because of the rushed transfer of duties. "The detail has not been looked at."

He is also worried that the districts will wrangle over the funding of "ring and ride" services.

Ian West, of Cleveland Disability Forum, accused unitary authorities of going back on promises to give money to local

voluntary organisations.

SCOVO, the Standing Conference of Voluntary Organisations for People with Learning Disabilities in Wales, is worried that many voluntary organisations in Wales will not survive.

"Some voluntary organisations are issuing redundancy notices because they have no idea whether they will survive. It has all happened so quickly, the administrative processes have not taken place," said spokesperson Karen Warner.

Duncan Tree, policy officer at the Association of County Councils said: "To provide the same level of services, unitary authorities are going to have to spend more. There are real fears about services which are seen as marginal."

Contact lens scare

Continued from page 1

Altogether, Moorfields has treated 183 cases of the infection since 1984, 67 in the year mid 1994-5.

Linda East of Bodmin, Cornwall needed a cornea graft to restore her vision after she con-

tracted the infection.

"I have been one of the lucky ones. For a long time it was very painful and distressing," she said.

Stephen Armitage is about to take a local optician to court after a cornea graft at Leeds hospital following an acanthamoeba infection. He plans to set up a support group.

Yes to vouchers

Continued from page 1

off and who will have to rely on an NHS chair."

RADAR director Bert Massie said that, if the Government, as is feared, decides only to issue vouchers every five years, people who use wheelchairs frequently would run the risk of wearing them out before they got a new voucher.

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Care charges demo

A demonstration against community care charges will take place from 1.30pm on 17 April outside the House of Commons. Speakers will include Labour MPs Chris Smith, Jack Jones and Alf Morris and Liberal Democrat Liz Lynne. Health Minister John Bowis has been invited.

Woman to sue

A disabled woman is suing former Chancellor Norman Lamont's Conservative Association in Kingston upon Thames after she fell off a ramp following a meeting with the MP to discuss access. Jane Lawrence, who has muscular dystrophy, claims she toppled off her wheelchair after a blackboard being used as a temporary ramp moved as she went over it. She broke her nose and suffered a leg injury. The association claims it had made clear the route was unsafe.

DLA letter protest

A consortium of eleven charities wrote to Social Security Secretary Peter Lilley in February protesting at his plan to withdraw the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance from people in hospital or residential care for more than 28 days (*DN January*). In reply, Minister Andrew Mitchell defended the change, saying it had been "carefully considered". The consortium has now written a further letter urging the department to reconsider.

Fenced off

A disabled Birmingham woman is in dispute with her council over a grass verge she used to drive over to her house.

Birmingham City Council says Patricia Beasley, 42, who has osteoarthritis and a lung condition, and two neighbours were driving across the grass illegally and causing a mess. They have been told they will have to pay £4,000 to have a drive built. The council has fenced off the area.

Ms Beasley claims the council fenced her car in and is disputing arguments that she can use a path to get to the road. "I cannot go outside in my electric wheelchair," she said.

DAN Euro campaign

Direct Action Network (DAN) has launched a letter campaign calling on the European Commission to say disability access to buses must be enforceable. Transport Commissioner Neil Kinnock emphasised access in a recent green paper *Citizens' Network*, but the commission's industry directorate is suggesting it should be optional, says DAN.

Details, tel: 0161-368 6603.

Hints on jobs scheme

DN exclusive

Speculation is mounting that the Government is about to do a dramatic u-turn on its job assistance scheme Access to Work.

Education and Employment Secretary Gillian Shephard changed the scheme before Christmas to focus on people not in work, even though 80 per cent of applications were from those already in jobs. This was said to be temporary until a full review was completed in April.

Some disabled people in work

whose circumstances changed, such as when they got promoted, found they were unable to get the help they needed (*DN March*).

DN has now learnt that ministers are seriously considering increasing the £13.4 million budget to £19 million when the review findings are announced.

This is said to be due "imminently". It is also thought that employers will be required to pay £250 per claimant.

Ministers had made it clear that there would be no more money available, leading to

fears that the targeting would become permanent.

The speculation has been further fuelled by remarks made by Minister for Disabled People Alistair Burt at a lunch to mark the Snowdon Awards (page 7).

Mr Burt admitted that "we have had a lot of representations" on the new limits.

While he could not force Mrs Shephard to reassess policies or predict the outcome of the review, he said he thought it possible the limits would be looked at.

- An early day motion by MPs of all parties has called on the Government to "set an adequate budget" for Access to Work.

Euthanasia law passed

The world's first law allowing terminally ill adults the right to die has been passed in Australia's Northern Territory.

Adults of sound mind with only one year to live will be able to ask doctors to end their lives. The territory has a population of 180,000.

And in America, a federal appeal court in San Francisco ruled in March that terminally ill people of sound mind have the right to ask for help in ending their lives.

A Supreme Court appeal is expected. About 30 states have made assisted suicide illegal.

Motability cuts again

Disabled drivers and their families can expect downpayments on some Motability lease cars to be reduced again in April.

Cuts in October were attributed to "internal savings" in Motability Finance Ltd (MFL), a new insurance contract and pressure on car manufacturers.

These are the result of falling interest rates and insurance prices, "harsh bargains with suppliers" and "areas of cuts", said Motability vice chairman Gerry Acher. "There is an oversupply in everything at the moment, so we can get good deals and pass them on to customers."

The cuts coincide with a report from merchant bankers J Henry Schroder, produced in October, which recommended that both the leasing and hire purchase arms of MFL should

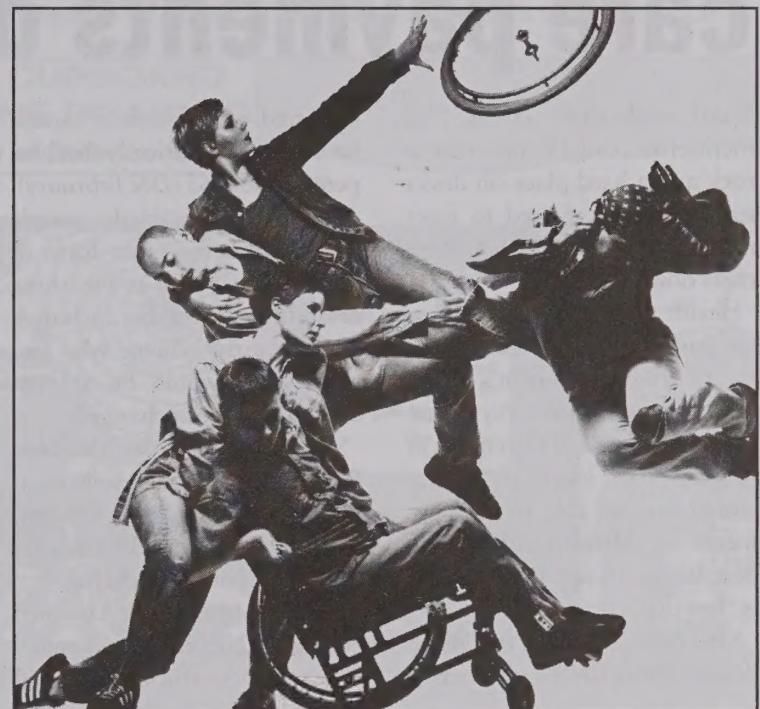
reduce their profit margins.

Motability listens to its advisers, contended Mr Acher. "The margin comes down to reflect what happens in the market."

Meanwhile, the National Audit Office (NAO) report on Motability, looking at whether the Government is getting good value for money from the charity, has been delayed yet again, to late April or early May. An NAO spokesperson said: "It is taking a long time to get clearance."

An expert in the field said: "It would be reasonable to assume the report would reflect those changes which had occurred."

Another report, on the car leasing market, is due in three months from the Centre for Automotive Management at the Henley Management College. Director Peter Cooke is a disabled driver.



Fresh from rave reviews in London, dance troupe CandoCo start a four-month UK tour in Oxford on 19 April. Details, tel: 0181-694 0903.

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It was an up and down month for Shadow Minister for Disabled People Tom Clarke. In February (above, left) Mr Clarke joined Scope campaigns officer Jill Stewart to highlight the inconsistency of accessible taxi services in London. Then in March (above, right) he



found himself on the receiving end of an angry demonstration and sit-in at Labour Party headquarters by Direct Action Network about the party's commitment to civil rights. An exasperated aide said: "It's not as if they have a difference of opinion on this."

LEFT: MICHAEL RUDDY, RIGHT: NIC PATON

Local authorities to face care payments dilemma

Local authorities could find themselves caught between a rock and a hard place on direct care payments, forced to meet needs fully while having to keep costs down.

Health Minister John Bowis, speaking during the second reading of the Government's Community Care (Direct Payments) Bill in the House of Commons in March, said local authorities would not be able to set payments at a level insufficient to people's needs, nor at a level that is "less than cost-effective".

Mr Bowis also gave more details about the Government's

preferred option that it should be limited to physically disabled people under 65 (DN February).

Physically disabled people "who had some other form of impairment", such as a learning disability, would be included. People on the scheme who had reached 65 would be able to continue without change.

Shadow Minister for Disabled People Tom Clarke welcomed the bill, but said the Government seemed "less than whole-hearted" about the scheme.

Former Minister for Disabled People Sir Nicholas Scott called for payments to include national

insurance and statutory sick pay costs for personal assistants.

Sir Nicholas also called for "a presumption, if not an obligation" that local authorities provide a scheme where there is demand. The bill will now go through to committee stage.

• Payments will only work if there are support schemes in place, a report* by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Disablement Income Group has warned.

**Facilitating and supporting Independent Living: a guide to setting up personal assistance schemes. £8, tel: 0171-263 3981.*

DDA regs attacked

Buildings will not have to be fully accessible under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) until the year 2005, according to draft regulations published by the Government in March.

The document, drawn up by the National Disability Council, is being consulted upon until May. It covers all proposed regulations, codes of practice and the timetable.

Under the proposed timetable, providers of goods and services will only have to change policies and procedures (such as lifting a ban on guide dogs) by 1998, provide auxiliary aids and services (like induction loops) by 2000 and remove "physical barriers" by 2005.

Caroline Gooding, director of the Disability Law Service and author of a guide to the DDA, said it made a "nonsense" of the act. "The Government says

ten years will allow providers of goods and services to prepare for the act. But we all know it just means they will not have to do anything for ten years."

The consultation pack is available in print, braille and on audio tape, tel: (0345) 622633, textphone (0345) 622644.

VAT's more like it!

The Government has scrapped VAT charges on two pieces of equipment for disabled people.

The Scott-Track Venturer powered wheelchair was zero-rated in February, after pressure in the House of Lords from Lord Tebbit, whose wife is disabled.

And a campaign by the Royal National Institute for Deaf People has led to the "Cystal" pocket amplifier being zero-rated as well.

Maverick Tory vows to keep pressing ministers

Maverick Conservative MP Peter Thurnham, who resigned the Tory whip in February, has vowed to continue pressing the Government on disability issues.

Mr Thurnham, MP for Bolton North East, said his resignation had been about specific issues, notably the Scott report on arms to Iraq. But the MP, who is

Thurnham: will "speak openly" on disability



the father of a disabled child, added that he would continue to "speak his mind very openly", especially on disability.

He conceded that he, Alan

Howarth, who defected to Labour last year, and Emma Nicholson, who went over to the Lib Dems at Christmas, were all from a similar wing of the party. "It is possible that the people who are concerned about disability are also the ones concerned with a wide range of issues trying to bring about a sense of fairness."

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In brief

Charging confusion

Inconsistent policies by local authorities on charging for home care services are leading to confusion and anxiety for disabled people, according to a report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and *Community Care* magazine. *The Cost of Care: the impact of charging policy on the lives of disabled people** found that disabled people found the charging system confusing, suffered financial hardship because they assumed services would be withdrawn if they did not pay and had little scope to reduce or withdraw from services.

* £11.50, tel: (0117) 9738797.

Respite care week

Britain's first ever Respite Care Awareness Week runs from 21-27 April. Sponsored by the Winged Fellowship, it aims to give disabled people and carers advice about respite care rights.

Tel: 0171-833 4579.

Chair cheer

BBC tv *Blue Peter* presenter Tim Vincent (below, left) visited equipment manufacturer Mangar International (MI) in February to present a powered wheelchair to 15-year old Chris Isaacs (centre, front), from Bridgewater, Somerset.



set. The Freestyle Junior was paid for by the Blue Peter/Whizz-Kidz appeal, which raised money in December for 120 wheelchairs. Also pictured are (centre, back) MI managing director David Garman and mobility liaison officer Miles Swinburne.

Helpline success

Cerebral palsy charity Scope is celebrating the findings of a survey of people who ring its cerebral palsy helpline. A random mailing of 200 people found that 100 per cent said they were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the help they were given. The only criticism was that the service was not well enough advertised.

11am-9pm, weekdays, 2pm-6pm weekends, freephone: (0800) 626216.

New stars charity

Famous names who used to be members of SOS, Scope's celebrity wing, have launched an independent charity.

The new Society of Stars has Frederick Forsyth as chairperson, Michael Grade as vice-chair and Bob Monkhouse and Richard O'Brien on its executive committee.

Members include Sarah Greene, Nigel Havers, Sir John Mills, Harry Secombe, Helen Shapiro and Ringo Starr. The total so far is 133.

"Our aim is to raise funds for children and adults with cerebral palsy and associated disabilities, and increase understanding of the aspirations of people with disabilities," said executive director Carol Hehir (formerly Myer).

It hopes to raise £75,000-£100,000 in its first year and is open to fundraising partnerships and funding applications, including from Scope. "We are not about competition," said Ms Hehir.

Tel: (01494) 872235.

Trust's '96 guide

The National Trust has published its 1996 *Information for Visitors with Disabilities* booklet. Available free from the trust, it lists disability provision at all types of trust properties and can be supplied in large print or on tape for people who are visually impaired.

MoD 'cupboards' gaffe

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has hit back over criticism of its plans to put disabled people into fire-proof "cupboards" during emergencies.

The row erupted in March after minutes on the refurbishment of MoD offices in Glasgow admitted that disabled people would be put in "large cupboards" for "safe-keeping".

An MoD spokesperson said the note was "unfortunately phrased. They are not cupboards."

All MoD buildings are being fitted with the rooms, which have double doors to keep out smoke and fire for up to one hour.

Disabled people would be put into the rooms until fire fighters

were able to come and get them.

"All new constructions and buildings undergoing refurbishment must have these safe areas built into them. We are complying with national and local fire regulations," said the MoD spokesperson.

People in wheelchairs would not necessarily be put in them automatically. It would depend on other provisions, he added.

But Liz Lynne, Liberal Democrat spokesperson on disability said: "These proposals are totally barbaric. The MoD is acting as if the lives of disabled people are of little importance.

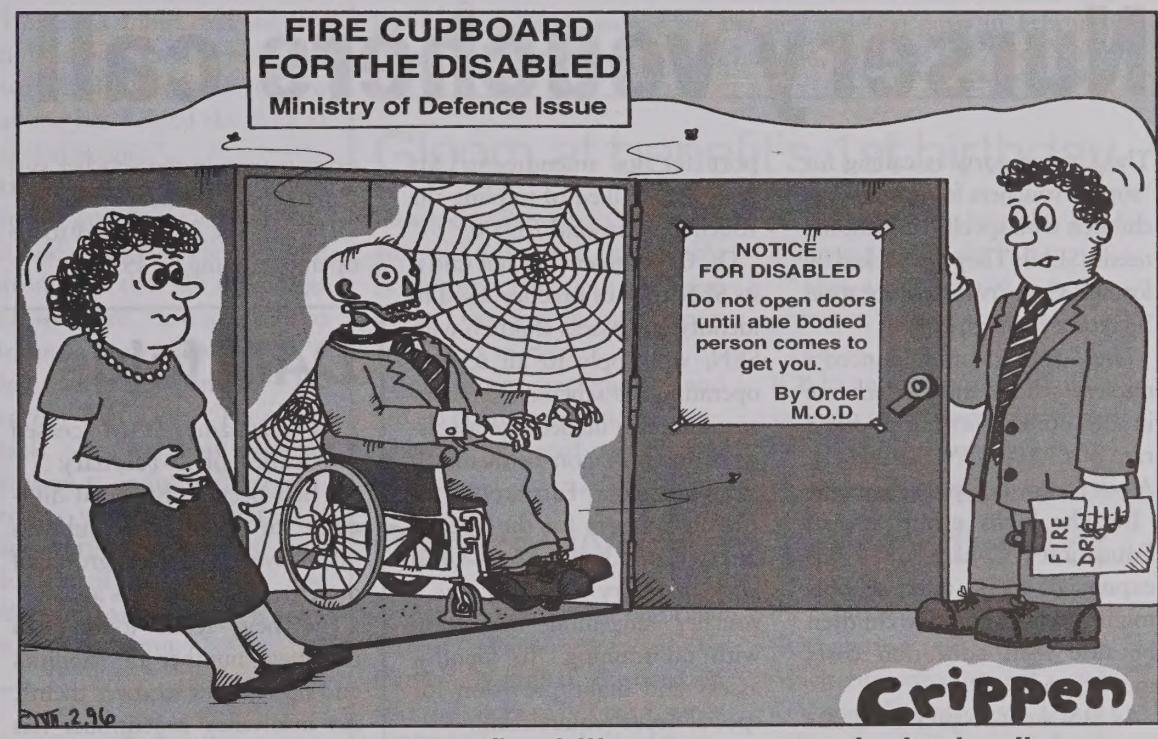
"There would be a total uproar if children or elderly

people were treated in a similar manner."

Former Labour Minister for Disabled People Alf Morris called the move "a nightmare". He said: "It is something like the bunker in Berlin in May 1945."

Top marks

A school for disabled children in Nottinghamshire has been awarded top marks by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Dawn House Special School in Rainworth was praised for its quality of teaching, value for money and the work of its therapists.



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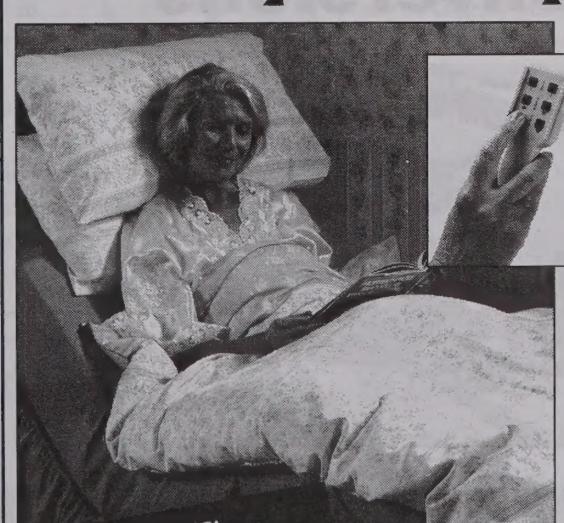
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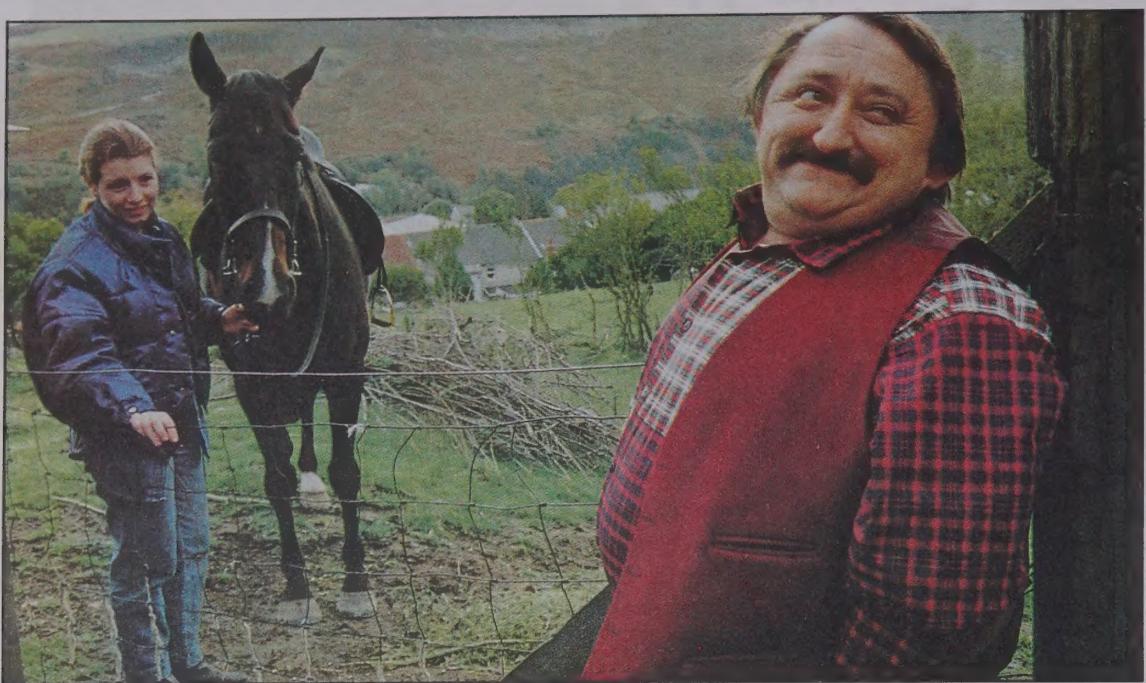
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Pot of gold: actor Keith "Beefy" Jones, who has brittle bones, starred in a BBC Wales drama in March. *Rainbow Chaser* told the story of Chunky (Jones), a bookie who takes two young people (Nathan John Powell and, left, Charlotte Merry) with a passion for horses under his wing. It was broadcast on 3 March.

Nursery vouchers call

The Labour party is calling for "super" vouchers for nursery age children with special educational needs (SEN). They are backed by former Conservative Education Secretary Kenneth Baker.

The Government announced a nursery school voucher scheme in November, setting a fixed rate of £1,100 (*DN December*). A bill is now before Parliament.

But the lobby group Special Education Consortium has expressed fears that schools might turn away SEN children because their education costs more than £1,100.

As *DN* went to press, Labour was hoping for cross-party sup-

port for its amendment. Mr Baker has talked of trebling the voucher, to around £3,000.

The Government has not said if its SEN code of practice, used to identify and assess children with SEN, will apply to all schools operating the scheme. The consortium fears inadequate assessment and provision for them.

Parent Tessa Farnbrook, of Action Support for the Special Needs Child, said: "Any Tom, Dick or Harry could become a voucher redeeming institution with no training. To identify, assess and make provision for special needs requires skill."

"At the moment there is no

extra money in the voucher system to allow for that provision."

The scheme is expected to be up and running by 1997.

DAM folds

Arts magazine *DAM* ceased publication on 29 February.

It had been in financial difficulty for some time and was taken over by a new group of directors three months ago.

The new team found "an unknown number of liabilities and no reserves to cover them". An insolvency practitioner has now been appointed.

Lottery New Year slump

The National Lottery caused a New Year slump in charity donations, a survey by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has found.

Double roll-over jackpots meant that 25-50 per cent more tickets were bought. This caused a 13 and 11 per cent fall in people giving money in December and January respectively. The January figure was the lowest NCVO had recorded since the Lottery began in 1994.

Meanwhile, Lottery bosses have rejected criticisms from MPs on the National Heritage Select Committee that it is a "permit to plunder the public".

Camelot boss Tim Holley said the more money raised, the more money went to good causes.

* DN's Chris Davies is urging disabled people to apply to the Arts Council for National Lottery cash. Too often it is assumed that Arts Council cash is just for large arts projects. Tel: 0171-312 0123.

And another thing...

The owner of specialist taxi firm CAB Mobility has written to Prime Minister John Major urging him to VAT exempt adaptations required to make taxis accessible under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Charlie Maylot also called for Government-backed loans and a fuel subsidy to help drivers hit by the changes.

In brief

Picture this

Disabled photographers in Colchester are being invited to take part in a project to get their work shown around the city. Signals, a film and video centre, and local students will work with disabled people to get pictures shown on buses and billboards from April until July.

Tel: (01206) 560255.

Bradford service

Bradford City Council, Barnardo's and Scope are launching an advisory service for Asian disabled people. The Bradford Asian Disability Advisory Project will provide information on access and services.

Tel: (01535) 600032.

Driving it home

Disabled learner drivers will be allowed to have examiners visit their homes to conduct the new "theory" driving test. BSM is offering the service "in exceptional cases", along with wheelchair access and special test centres. The 35-question written test will start on 1 July.

The write stuff

The RNIB is on the lookout for budding writers to enter a competition for visually impaired people. Stories should be 1,200-2,500 words, and can be submitted in braille, print or on disk. First prize is £100, with the winner published in fiction magazine *Raconteur*. Tel: (0345) 626271.

* The Women's Press is producing a book by disabled women aged 11-23. Stories should be up to 1,500 words. Tel: (01942) 724638.

Wonder woman

29 April is the deadline for nominations for this year's Frink Woman of the Year Award. The award, which is in its 41st year, is presented to a visually impaired woman of high achievement. For a nomination form, tel: 0171-620 2066.

Supermarket wars

Supermarket chains Tesco and Sainsbury are targeting visually impaired customers. Sainsbury, currently in a fierce price war with Tesco, is distributing 15,000 tapes detailing special offers, and Tesco is preparing 50,000 tapes on healthy eating.

Corrections

From DN's February issue: Sheffield University also offers an MA diploma in disability studies. Details, tel: (0114) 282 4970. The European Commission's Intergovernmental Conference will be held in Turin, Dublin and London later this year.

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RECOGNISED CONVERTER

Prison cells storm

A prison reform group has condemned reports that women with mental health conditions are having to live in "battery-men" prison cells where they are not even allowed flowers.

Reports in *The Observer* newspaper in March alleged that the women, many of whom are on remand, have been transferred from Pucklechurch Prison in Bristol to a new prison nearby, Eastwood Park. There they endure what is called a

"basic regime", living in 6ft by 9ft cells. The prison will eventually house 134 prisoners.

Mike Grewcock, legal policy officer at the Howard League for Penal Reform, has attacked the regime. Female remand prisoners present an above-average risk of suicide or self-mutilation as it is, he said. A regime like this could only make things worse.

"We do not think Eastwood Park should have been opened. The prison service knew in

advance that the cells were below their own minimum standards."

At present, rooms for mothers to see their children have not even been built. There are also fears that the prison has fewer prison hospital facilities for psychotherapy.

A spokesperson for the Prison Service said: "If you have someone who is mentally ill requiring a nurse, they will be in a hospital wing or transferred to a hospital."

Vera win...

Dame Vera Lynn has been elected as chairperson of SOS, the Scope stars group that raises money for people with cerebral palsy.



Dame Vera: new SOS chair
GILL SHAW

Dame Vera is a founder member of SOS, now in its 41st year. SOS's "Roaring Twenties" Ball will be at the Waldorf Hotel, London on 24 March. Tickets, price £75, are now available, tel: 0171-637 9681.

Esther raises hackles

DN exclusive

Tv celebrity Esther Rantzen was given a special award "for services to the lives of disabled people" by Lord Snowdon in March, generating a storm of controversy.

Ms Rantzen, known for programmes like *That's Life* and *Hearts of Gold*, said she was "proud and thrilled".

But her award, centrepiece of this year's Snowdon Awards, which helps young disabled people pursue further education through bursaries, has raised hackles among disabled people.

They complain that shows like *Hearts of Gold* perpetuate negative, tragic images of disability. Research fellow at Leeds Uni-

versity Tom Shakespeare called the award "outrageous".

"I have no doubt that she is a well meaning, kind person, but I would challenge the notion that she has helped the lives of disabled people."

Richard Wood, director of the British Council of Disabled People, said it was "unbelievable and patronising" that she should get such an award. "It is an insult to our integrity and intelligence."

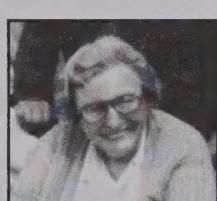
But an unrepentent Ms Rantzen told DN: "There are people who feel that drawing attention to individual achievement is wrong and that it is inappropriate to describe such achievement as inspiring and exemplary. That view happens not to be mine."

Cp pioneer dies aged 76

Audrey Angers, who pioneered support for people with cerebral palsy, died in February aged 76.

Born with cerebral palsy in 1919, she founded the Liverpool Spastics Fellowship in 1952 and set up the residential home Angers House, now Mayfield Court, which she ran for three decades. The fellowship affiliated with the Spastics' Society in the mid-1980s.

A fighter:
Audrey
Angers,
who
died in
February



MARGARET YOUNG

Alice Runcieman, secretary of the Liverpool Cerebral Palsy Society, said: "She was a fighter. When nobody was bothered about people with cerebral palsy, she was. It was her life."

Lap of legacy

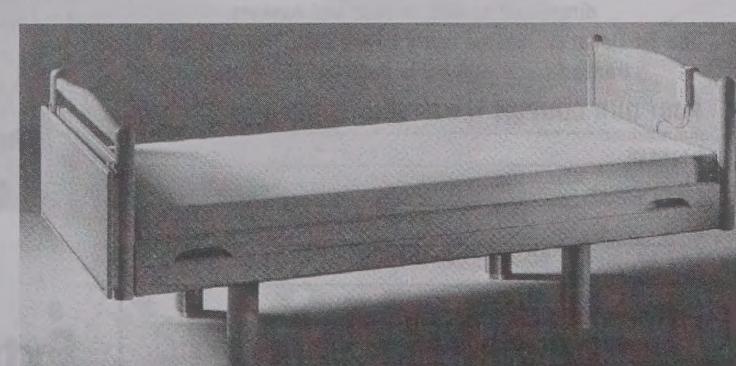
Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) is the most popular disability charity for people who want to give money in the form of legacies, according to a survey of charity accounts.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution tops the list, compiled by *The Guardian*, with £38.4 million. GDB comes sixth with £20.1 million. The only other disability charity is the Royal National Institute for the Blind, in tenth place with £16.8 million.

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Learning curve: three-year-old Matthew Joslin, from Ipswich, who has cerebral palsy, walked for the first time on grass in February, thanks to Scope's Peto Centre in London, tel: 0171-383 7144.

EAST ANGLIAN DAILY NEWS

Gloom at benefit's 1st birthday

Incapacity Benefit (ICB) is one year old this April, but trouble is brewing, Pauline Thompson of the Disability Income Group (DIG) has warned.

Appeals are stacking up, and DIG is building evidence of cases where people aged over 55 and

previously getting Invalidity Benefit have failed to get ICB.

"They are coming to us in desperation," she said.

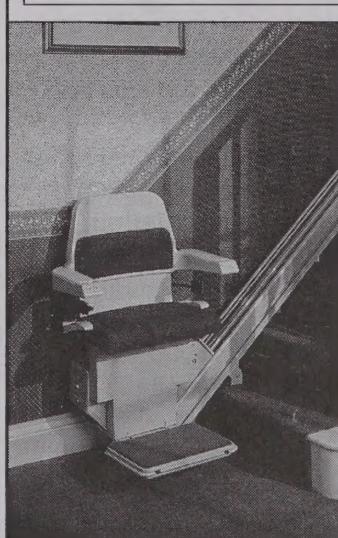
This is despite the fact that ICB has not even resulted in the savings the Government had hoped for (DN February).

Carers' Week to celebrate Act

29 April is the start of National Carers' Week, organised by Carers' National Association and the chemist Boots. A series of UK-wide events will celebrate

the success of the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act, which guarantees carers a right to a needs' assessment. The act will come into force on 1 April.

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Gene bank study into diabetes

People with diabetes are being asked to give blood samples to a pioneering gene bank as part of a study that hopes to find a cure for the condition by the year 2000.

The gene bank will store genetic information on more than 600 pairs of brothers and sisters diagnosed with non-insulin dependent diabetes after the age of 35.

Hundreds of families are being sought to take part in the project, launched in February by the British Diabetic Association (BDA).

The gene bank, the first of its kind in the world, is known as Warren 2, and is being run from centres in Newcastle, Oxford, Exeter, Norwich and London.

"There is a sense of urgency and excitement about this project because genes definitely hold some of the secrets about the causes of diabetes," said BDA research director Dr Moira Murphy.

Freephone: (0800) 607060.

Brain power

Severely disabled people could one day use brain waves to steer their wheelchairs.

Although people who have no leg or arm movement cannot



Streetwise in Seattle: a disabled man moves through a virtual reality-generated city using a voice control to steer his wheelchair. Research at London's Imperial College is helping people with Parkinson's disease who have mobility difficulties to practise stepping over objects projected "virtually" in front of them.

PETER MENZEL/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

send nerve signals, the brain-waves preceding them can still be detected.

Some movements, such as lifting the tongue, fingers or toes, produce a lot of distinctive brain activity and computers could translate them into directions for steering.

An Austrian team can detect these waves with 80 per cent accuracy. Now researchers at Imperial College, London, led by Dr Stephen Roberts, want to perfect the detection rate so that it can be used reliably. The team hopes to start working with disabled people on a trial device by the start of 1997.

"At first we'd see if the technique worked in a safe environ-

ment," said Dr Roberts.

"If we can get a high accuracy we might be able to put a computer underneath an electric wheelchair and go the whole way. It could be decades before anything comes out of this but it could be a very important piece of technology."

Expecting relief

A vaccine which simulates some of the conditions of pregnancy could help to relieve the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.

Scientists have found that about 70 per cent of women with rheumatoid arthritis start to feel better during pregnancy.

The symptoms of the condition appear when an over active immune system attacks the cartilage between joints.

Because a foetus is a foreign body, it would miscarry unless the mother's immune system was less active.

Bruce Smith, of Jefferson

Medical College, Philadelphia, has tried to recreate some of the conditions of pregnancy by injecting the white blood cells of a partner or friend.

In the first tests, eight out of 11 women showed improvements. Bruce Smith thinks the treatment should work for men too.

"It is an area of research which is very interesting because of the prevalence of arthritis in young women shortly after child bearing," said a spokesperson for the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council.

Quick-fix bone gel

A new gel could help broken bones to mend, say American scientists.

In one in 20 fractures scar tissue is produced rather than bone tissue, leaving a limb badly healed and difficult to use.

The gel, which can be injected into a fracture, contains DNA,

which tells cells to make bone.

Gaps as large as one quarter of an inch can be bridged using the gel, say the researchers, led by Professor Steven Goldstein at the University of Michigan.

Although human trials will not begin for another two years Professor Goldstein believes the gel could help people with bone defects, complex breaks, or those whose bones do not heal.

Asthma gets the needle

Acupuncture can help people with asthma says the National Asthma Campaign.

Out of 16 studies, 13 showed positive results, says the charity but warned that it was dangerous for people to stop taking their traditional medicine.

The improvements included a reduction in the amount of medication people needed to take and reduced breathlessness.

"In almost all studies the combination of orthodox western treatment – such as commonly used inhaled medication – and acupuncture, the level of medication patients were taking was able to be reduced," said Dr Kim Jobst, a trained acupuncturist and director of the Oxford Project to Investigate Memory and Ageing.

However, in most studies standard medical treatments were still more effective than acupuncture alone.

Pain relief

An audio cassette has been produced by Liverpool's Pain Research Institute to help people who have back pain. *Coping with Back Pain** includes posture advice, useful exercises and relaxation techniques.

*£11.99, tel 0151-632 0662.

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Further details may be obtained by writing to: The Nuffield Foundation, 28 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3EG, or by telephone:

Application form/information sheet: 0171-580 7434

Queries/additional information: 0171-631 0566.

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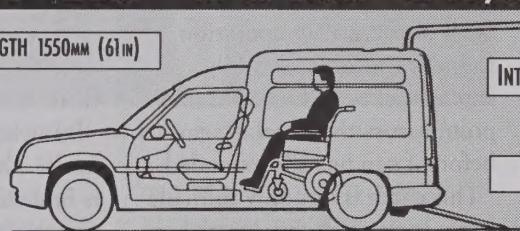
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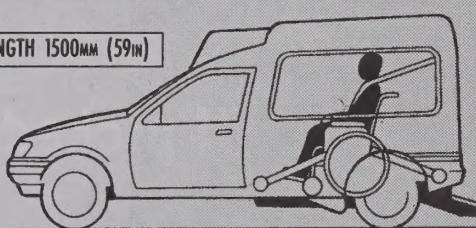


INTERIOR HEADROOM 1420MM (56in)

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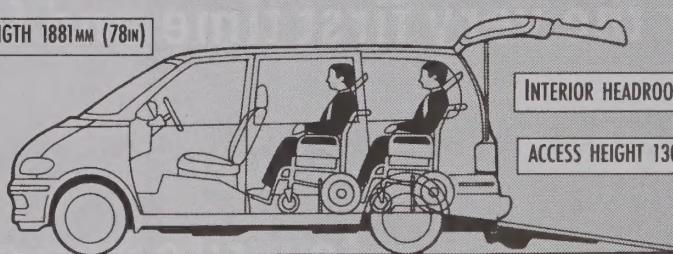


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David Griffiths tests the brand new Hampshire CL5

Mention a Volkswagen (VW) and you think of Germany, Beetles and Devonian mini-homes on wheels. Link it with disability and only a select few specialist companies spring to mind. Tried, trusted and well-entrenched, like the Invatravel Caravelle (*DN March*), or the Devon Discovery.

Germany, Devon, VW and Hampshire? Yes, Hampshire has made it, thanks to Trimtruk of Andover. Using the VW Kombi (a down market Caravelle), Trimtruk has come up with a comfortable, attractive and robust piece of disability hardware: the Hampshire CL5.

You can be forgiven for not having heard of it before – this one was so new it hadn't even been registered when it arrived outside my office bearing its maker's logo in lieu of a registration plate.

With doors on both sides, rather than the usual double door on one side, access for rear seat users is easier, especially when a wheelchair is on board.

A major headache for many VW owners is that it becomes almost essential to fit the wheelchair user in last.

Tough, tidy and trim



Andover your automobile: the Hampshire CL5 is comfortable, attractive and robust

But having a door on both sides calls for an additional step well which intrudes on underfloor space and prevents the fitting of a fully automatic underfloor lift.

Instead, a twin section version of the Ricon Mirage is used. Semi-automatic in operation, I found it tiresome. A fiddly catch must be unlocked at mid-point across the lift platform before it can be fully extended.

This catch is not only difficult to see in the dark, but located on

the opposite side to the control panel. To load and unload, you must either stretch across the whole width of the platform, or unceremoniously release the control unit and move to the other side. Such poor design does little credit to something with a price tag in excess of £5,000, even if it is virtually rattle free when stowed.

But what about the vehicle itself? The overall trim quality is first class with careful attention to colour matching.

On the road, the vehicle rides well, even on the roughest of surfaces. I felt comfortable as my carers swapped front seat positions to take turns at the wheel and wrestle with the none-too-docile clutch. This feature, along with the somewhat unforgiving gear change, made both drivers curse more than once, although each admitted they would soon get used to the combination.

The test vehicle featured a 2.4 litre diesel, first aid kit, fold-

down armrests for the front seat users, power steering and flush-fit Unwin tracking and clamps. My wheelchair refused to accept the Unwin clamps, but the seat belts were excellent. I got a clear view of the road ahead and my surroundings.

Performance seemed pretty pedestrian next to the 5-cylinder Caravelle, but it held a credible legal limit without qualm and ran quietly.

This vehicle costs just over £23,000. Not cheap – but it has durability and feels able to transport its owner for years. It looks good too. Trimtruk give the carpet a ten-year guarantee and it was impossible to fault their workmanship.

A pity about the lift. For this sort of cash I expect a bit more thought. Otherwise, it is a welcome newcomer to the field of transport for the disabled passenger and a reminder of the good things that can come from one of Britain's most attractive regions.

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on an excellent newspaper." Pamela Breakwell, Boston, Lincs

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Disability NOW

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The reluctance of experts to accept Dean's ME put us all under stress'

When Cherie Lobb's teenage son contracted ME, she faced an uphill battle to be heard

In May 1994 my son Dean went down with the 'flu virus. He was 14. After two weeks, he turned to school in Worthing, Essex suffering stomach pains and being unable to concentrate. The nurse recommended he go to a special needs class, assuming it was just a dislike of school. Previously Dean had been doing well and was active in all sports. Dean remained until July, two weeks before the summer holidays, when he was unable to cope any longer. During the holidays he became weaker and his stomach pains made it difficult to sit. We constantly visited the doctor, who was just puzzled. Finally he referred Dean to a specialist.

Dean saw many doctors and each time he felt confused and ejected at their lack of understanding. One thought he

name to the illness. Friends and family all wanted to believe in Dean and what he was going through, but like myself and my husband at first, we all found it difficult to understand. This made Dean very hurt and angry.

Some days he would look better than others and people would say, "I'm glad you're looking better," when inside he was feeling no different. This made him more depressed, confused and angry.

As time went on he found it difficult to cope with noise, to talk without muddling his words and to be with many people at once, even his family. The worry took over our lives and made us anxious and tired. Dean's younger sister was understanding but upset about what was happening.

I telephoned our local ME association, who put me in touch with Dr Betty Dowsett in Billericay. She diagnosed Dean's illness as ME. We were so relieved to have a name put to it. A visit to Brighton Hospital confirmed it.

But we were now being pressured by the school authorities because Dean had not been able to attend school for eight months. We started another battle to get a note to say Dean wasn't well enough.

Constant reluctance from medical experts to help meant more stress for us all, mainly Dean. I contacted Dr Dowsett again, who put us in touch with Action for ME's Jane Colby who in turn put us in touch with Brian Ashworth at the Orchard ME Group. It was from this point that we began to have hope. Dean said: "At last someone believes me!" Brian Ashworth helped us with

'People would say, "I'm glad you're looking better," when inside Dean was feeling no different. This made him more depressed.'

ad glandular fever. Another arranged a gastroscopy. Nothing showed up. Dean was becoming weaker and fearful as to what was happening to him. His depression and mood swings were getting worse. Then I read an article about myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME). The symptoms were identical: forgetfulness, confusion, difficulty concentrating, depression, joint pains, headaches, muscle pain and weakness, constant mood swings and poor sleep. I showed this to our doctor but he was reluctant to put this



Cherie and Dean: "Now at last we have a more positive future"

a diet for Dean and guided us on what to say to the school.

The school provided Dean with a home tutor for three hours a week, which was difficult for him, but at least kept up contact with school.

The idea was to reintegrate him slowly. But the school thought that, if he was well enough for a tutor, he was well enough to attend some lessons.

One of the essentials with people with ME is that they are

put under as little stress as possible. Because of all the battles, this just did not happen. After 18 months we finally got a letter from our doctor to say Dean was unable to attend school and that he should continue with his home tutor.

All of these things occurred because of a lack of understanding of ME. Now at last we have a more positive view of the future and look forward to Dean recovering, hopefully within the next few years.

Action for ME, tel: (01749) 670799.

Orchard ME Group, tel: (01902) 494717.

1996 is Action for ME's "Year of the Child" to raise the issue of ME among children and ways to combat it. The campaign coincides with International ME Awareness Week, from 6-12 May. The "year" will be launched on 24 April by TV celebrity Esther Rantzen, whose daughter Emily has ME. A "Children's Charter" will also be published, setting out guidelines on how to care for children with ME. Former head teacher and member of the National ME Taskforce Focus Group on Children Jane Colby has written a book, *ME - the new plague*, to coincide with the event. £12.95, from Action for ME. For campaign details, tel: (01749) 670799.

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Have they run out of steam?



Vic Finkelstein caused a furore when he claimed in February's *DN* that the disability movement was split, criticised passive "navel gazing" and proposed mainstream action. Here are some reactions.



British Council of Disabled People (BCODP) have apparently lost their vision for change and "run out of steam".

Vic reminisces about the "heady" days of the '70s, when the social model was so actively promoted and bemoans the fact that our apparent lack of vision has failed to inspire creativity in the media, disability arts or television.

Yes, the early days were exciting and the discovery of the truth revealed in the social model has been the greatest liberating force in the lives of many disabled people.

But this is still true today. In the '70s, the model belonged to an elite few; today it belongs to tens of thousands whose lives have been shaped through their contact and involvement with the movement.

Indeed, so successful has been the promotion of the model, that BCODP now has 112 member groups and a growing number of individual members.

I do share Vic's sadness that

disability arts and culture is not thriving as it should, but I cannot share his view that we have failed to have an impact on the media. Programmes such as the BBC's *Old School Ties* show that radical broadcasting on disability is by no means dead. However, it is not just "disability slots" that we feature in as we did in the '70s. Disability issues have become mainstream and it is BCODP and the wider movement that has put them there.

Vic argues that BCODP has returned to pressure group politics at the expense of grass roots work. Perhaps, then, he can explain why the UK movement is the best informed, best organised and most politically aware movement in Europe, if not in the world?

We have a breadth that is not seen in any other country. This allows us to be expert on our own issues and has enabled other oppressed groups, such as lesbian, gay and black disabled people, disabled women and people with learning difficulties, to find and express their own voice within the framework of the social model.

Despite our consistent underfunding by central government and our general shortage of resources, we continue to make an impact at

the grass roots level.

We are part way through developing a "local groups" support programme and we have just received funding to establish an independent living (IL) unit, which will advise local coalitions and individual disabled people on a wide range of IL issues.

We are working on setting up a national information centre which will focus on the resources and information available within the movement so that these can be more widely shared.

We also strive to increase democracy in the movement. Allowing individual membership has been an important step forward.

Of course, we are extremely active in the political arena as well, but why this should be seen as a weakness rather than a strength is mystifying.

Disabled people's fundamental human and civil rights must be underpinned by appropriate legislation. Without the actions of BCODP – and, more recently, Direct Action Network (DAN) – civil rights would not even be on the agenda.

If Vic is saying that we should

not approach these issues until we can throw thousands of troops into a Trafalgar Square demo (the true number was 3,000 in 1994), then we are likely to be a movement always waiting for it to happen.

BCODP's research into discrimination faced by disabled people helped support the series of private member's bills which have been placed before parliament since 1991.

How could we have ignored this opportunity to present the true level of discrimination faced by disabled people before our own parliament? Should we have kept quiet? Should we have left the lobbying to the "for" organisations who only seven years ago were saying that we did not need comprehensive civil rights legislation?

No, Vic, disabled people made the decision to raise the political profile and BCODP was mandated as long ago as 1989 at its AGM to make the campaign for comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation its top priority.

This decision was not made by a few leaders who lacked vision, but by disabled activists at the grass roots level who had vision.

I share Vic's views that we are moving into exciting but unknown times.

He is correct that the Government's Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) has the potential to drive a wedge into the disabled community. What he and others can be assured of is that BCODP has a longer term vision beyond the current legislation.

Our campaign for a full civil rights bill will continue, as will our work to build a movement. We don't accept the view that the battle on the social model has been won (look at the DDA for example) and the vast majority of disabled people in this country are still disempowered.

Many grim issues are lurking on the horizon. Euthanasia, genetic engineering and medicine and the growth of interest in the eugenics movement all threaten us.

Thank God that BCODP does have the vision to build on its strengths for, without our voice, who will be left to fight our cause?

Richard Wood
Chief executive, BCODP
Derby



It is essential that the issues raised in Vic Finkelstein's article are seriously debated.

The disability movement was built on the firm foundation provided by the understanding and application of the social model of disability. Many local and national organisations "of" disabled people have used it to argue for, and bring about, the

extensive removal of barriers to our emancipation. To a lesser extent, many organisations "for" disabled people have been unable to ignore the model's clear diagnosis of the cause of disablement, as opposed to the causes of impairment.

The attempts in recent years to corrupt the social model by including issues relating to illness and impairment have led to confusion and distress.

It is dangerously seductive to believe that if non-disabled people know how we feel about being impaired and about the

discrimination practised against us, then discrimination will stop. The history of the struggle of black people and women, as well as our own, shows this cannot be so.

Vic is right in suggesting that the way forward is for disabled people to become involved in mainstream issues. The struggle against the continued exclusion of disabled children from mainstream school must be a priority for the disability movement. But in that we must join the wider fight against the appalling level to which mainstream education has sunk.

Disabled people have begun to consider the difficult and painful issues around genetic research, abortion and euthanasia. But we must quickly be part of the public debates, and we must develop arguments as clearly irrefutable as those that carried us forward with the social model of disability.

If we fail, there may not be too many of us around to take advantage of a DDA, whether it is comprehensive or not.

Anne Rae
Macclesfield, Cheshire

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Letters to the Editor



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e-mail: dnow@d-access.demon.co.uk

Pavement parking

Brenda Ewart of Cambridgeshire (*DN January*) asks for support to try and stop vehicles parked on pavements.

It is a nationwide problem. In Newcastle upon Tyne, the city council and Northumbria police have pandered for many years to the motorist.

Flushed with success

I was interested in Dave Allcock's article on the National Key Scheme (*DN March*).

Our loo in Peterborough has just won a national award. It seems Peterborough is really lucky.

A brass plaque has been put in the loo - six feet up. Us wheelchair users need binoculars to read it! Still, the thought was there.

Nicky Hampshaw
Walton, Peterborough

I am afraid you are being rather optimistic about contacting local authorities. I have been in touch with mine and Northumbria police for more than a year.

Since January 1995 they are supposed to have been supporting a project about this problem. They are not making a great deal of effort.

However, I will continue to try to get something done.

Frank Campbell
Newcastle upon Tyne

Wet wipe angel

Did I read this right, has *DN* really given space to something called the "Continence Carer of the Year Award"?

We are told that to win this award "people with incontinence can nominate whoever assists them most". This angel of the wet wipes can then win £200 or £50 for a regional runner-up.

You don't have to take a hard

Hot foot to Oxford

Your "City Focus on Oxford" (*DN March*) incorrectly suggests that bus deregulation is a county council responsibility.

Deregulation occurred in 1985 when the national laws were changed. The changes allow bus operators to run buses largely wherever they consider there would be commercial advantages.

Oxfordshire County Council and the City Council are introducing proposals for the city centre that will permit removal of buses, allowing Cornmarket Street to be fully pedestrianised, with substantial increases in orange badge parking spaces and a shop mobility scheme.

Roger Williams
Chief transport planner
Oxfordshire County Council

line disability rights perspective to understand that the relationship between the "carer" and the disabled person requiring help must be one of mutual respect.

What could possibly be gained from an award like this other than to humiliate the person who requires this help and to embarrass the person who provides it?

Lois Keith
London NS

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Student diary

'I'm having an inner conflict'



I thought university would be the land of the liberal minded. In reality, I've come up against complacency about disability, particularly from people over 25.

When I complained to our warden about the lift being turned off at 10.30pm, he said if I wasn't happy, I could go to Brewster house where there were facilities for the disabled.

This made me angry. Does he not realise that if I lived in that other house - where, incidentally, the lifts are also turned off at 10.30 - I would want to visit friends in other houses?

Then my university GP asked me, wouldn't I be better off living at home, being looked after by my parents? I was furious and said lots of disabled people manage to live independently. Independence is one of the things I relish about university. It upsets me that because of my disabilities, I'm more dependent on others than my peers.

The administration, treatment, thought and planning my disabilities require and the physical pain they cause, eats up half my life. Because I'm short on time and energy for other things, I still choose to do some socialising and be behind in my work.

Most able-bodied people I know in the first year spend most of their time doing hectic socialising and society linked activities, treating their university work as subsidiary. I see this as no bad thing as I find I learn so much by doing other activities, meeting people and exchanging ideas. Thanks to this, and my course, my views about people and the world are continually changing.

DN's diary

News sense

Former *Sun* editor, now L!VE TV boss Kelvin MacKenzie is on the hunt for newsreaders who stammer for his cable tv station. The latest wheeze follows on from "news bunny", a fluffy rabbit that sits behind the presenter giving the thumbs-up or down to "good" or "bad" news.

The British Stammering Association says it is keen on the idea as it would help break down barriers and preconceptions. Some of its members have been interviewed. But would you trust Mr

I'm having an inner conflict the moment about whether or not I'm going to change my society-type activities. These are currently entirely disability related. It's tempting to throw them overboard because I want time and space to nurture other hobbies and interests, like choir, debating or writing. I just feel completely enveloped in disability issues, yet I see they need to be done.

Because my disabilities aren't obvious, I often get looks from people when I use the lift to go up one floor, as if they are saying I'm lazy and slowing up their journey. I find myself dramatising my problem, stepping out with a great hobby clutching the side of the wall - visual explanation of what happens if I don't use the lift.

Edinburgh feels as much like home as Dorset now. And although I love my parents, I only feel the need to phone home when I'm having problems relating to my disabilities.

We students are busy organising flats for next year. I'm actually itching to live in an inaccessible old building - albeit on the ground floor. They make up almost all the housing in the student community areas. Although it's a term and a half away, I will have to think what I'll do when my friends live upstairs in the liftless buildings.

Working out who you want to live with causes hurt and fallou because people keep changing their minds. I'm going to live with four friends. Not, incidentally, the "friends for life" that I mentioned in my first article, who I hardly ever see!

MacKenzie not to make a gimmick of it?

Prayer fodder

At a recent conference on Disability and the Bible in the London borough of Waltham Forest chairperson Alison Beaver served: "Why does God allow disability?" Returned from the floor: "To give able-bodied people something to pray about."

President, and correct?
Senator Bob Dole looks set to become the Republican Party's presidential candidate and possibly the first disabled president since Roosevelt. His right hand is paralysed from a war wound. Did you know?

Curry on accounting

avid Cracknell quit the rat-race to do voluntary work. Rod Hermeston asked him why.

Everyone likes a challenge, but I travel to the village of Cowthorne, Berkshire, I reflect at I am about to interview an accountant, a species forever marginalised by Monty Python. David Cracknell has just finished a two-year spell in the sheltering heat and lashing monsoons of Sri Lanka fighting poverty, and is about to go back for another six months. A couple of stereotypes evaporate. David, 30, has cerebral palsy and walks with two sticks. He works as a Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) volunteer with Avodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services (SEEDS) near the Sri Lankan capital Colombo. VSO sends professional volunteers overseas to work with local people, and pass on their knowledge. Over 35 years it has sent 20,000 people abroad. Postings are for two years. Volunteers' flights are paid for,

've seen disabled people dragging themselves about on the ground. People manage somehow.'

is National Insurance at home and a local allowance. VSO now employs about 1,800 people and is looking for more disabled people to join.

David assesses loan applications from people starting up small businesses. He helps decide how £2 million a year is spent on anything from textiles to paddy farming. "When it works you see the benefit – a rise in confidence in the villages." I once stopped at a shop made from wattle and daub, which had been built with a small loan, and the proprietor insisted on treating us to drinks."

But why VSO? After a mainstream education with his twin brother he took an economics degree at Leicester University and worked for five years as an accountant. "There were values that I had that weren't being fulfilled in accountancy. I believe in sharing my experience. I don't think that Monday morning feeling in Sri Lanka. I'm much more confident and it has given me a different outlook on life."

At university he was involved with rag weeks. While an accountant, he ran a local VSO branch. Meeting returning volunteers helped make up his mind to go. He mixes idealism and pragmatism.



David Cracknell (right) in Sri Lanka: "To be truly successful you have to move beyond what is comfortable"

VSO

"You will not be able to save money out of VSO but I've had an experience that you cannot value in money. Perhaps I can climb further when I believe in what I'm doing."

This only partly explains his move. He has a genuine lust for adventure. In 1987 he took flying lessons through the Douglas Bader Flying Scholarship with the International Air Tattoo.

"I've always had itchy feet. To be truly successful you have to move beyond what is comfortable and easy to achieve."

But he did not make the Sri Lanka move lightly. "It's

important for disabled people interested in VSO work to go along to their support groups and speak to people and consider it carefully.

"You get training and go over in a group and spend time getting used to the culture of a country before you start work."

The effort of Sri Lankan life and lots of curry helped him lose two stone. "In Sri Lanka the physical adjustment was quite hard. I tended to over-react and push myself quite hard by walking to places I didn't know I could reach."

Before leaving England he was told by an Indian man: "You will be surprised at what you

David Cracknell is one of only a small number of disabled volunteers working with VSO. The organisation is looking to recruit more disabled people. Volunteers must be between 20 and 70 years old and qualified in their chosen field. VSO's head office and training centre are wheelchair accessible. Application forms and information are available in large print or tape. Readers and deaf signers are also available for people who are visually or hearing impaired. For details, tel: 0181-780 1331.

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can achieve." What he found shocked him but he feels the harshness breeds determination in disabled Sri Lankans as it did in himself.

"There are no design considerations as far as disabled people go. There are holes in the roads and paths and large monsoon drainage ditches which you can fall into."

Admittedly, there is a darker side to the country which he does not have to face. For instance, he gets a lift to work and would be jetted home if he fell ill.

"Some disabled people are kept out of the public eye by their families. There is no perception that people with a disability can achieve.

"Some live on the streets begging. In the Buddhist culture there is a different attitude to begging. It's okay. In that sense there is a safety net, but it's a hard life.

"I've seen a lot of disabled people dragging themselves about on the ground. People manage somehow."

Despite the conditions, he is no shrinking violet and likes to get out and about.

"It can become a clique of volunteers, but as my Sinhala [the local language] and my confidence increased I found I could go out and make my own friends in the community.

"It's very nice to have the kind of beach resort you see on *The Holiday Programme* 20 minutes down the road. But it is a totally different culture. For instance, if you want to go out with a girl, you would have to approach the family first."



The hostility of social security policy towards claimants makes it seem almost fanciful to think about how a benefits system might work that was both fair and effective.

Nonetheless, people indulge these fancies all the time. Many serious studies appear every year on how social security might be reformed.

User-friendliness dashed

The latest changes show the harsh realities that imaginative ideas are up against. Plans were announced last month for the biggest cuts yet in the cost of running the benefits system.

They come at a time when claimants' experience suggests that the Benefits Agency is getting more user friendly. Now that promise is in jeopardy.

For example, as a benefits adviser, I often used to do calculations to help people anticipate how a change in their circumstances – leaving home, moving in with someone, starting part-time work – would affect their benefits.

People have been finding that if they go to the Benefits Agency with this kind of enquiry, they can get the same information on a computer print-out. This is extremely useful: it helps people plan and stay in control.

But such information is not generally available. Many social security offices do not have the time or staff to deal with all their basic work, let alone offer such extras. So what hope is there after further cuts?

Unemployment v incapacity
Another harsh reality is the relentless squeeze of the conditions imposed for both unemployment benefit and incapacity benefit.

One year the priority is to get unemployment figures down, so disabled people are persuaded to go "on the sick". Another year this goes into reverse and people are pushed the other way.

Last year, we saw the introduction of new incapacity tests designed to penalise people "on the sick".

In October this year we will see a new Jobseeker's Allowance with much tighter conditions for unemployed people, so the pressure will be from both directions at once.

People doing voluntary work are also being pressured.

Turn recipients into advisers and you could save money

DN's benefits expert Dave Gibbs has some advice for the Government

After publicity of some awful decisions penalising volunteers, rules were introduced which should have made the position of volunteers clearer.

People accepted as incapable of doing full time, paid work can now put in up to 16 hours a week as volunteers.

In practice, volunteering is being treated like "therapeutic earnings", requiring medical and workplace endorsement. The questions can be detailed and intrusive.

A nine-point grilling received by one would-be volunteer, a DN reader, included: "Who



first suggested the work should be undertaken?" "Does your doctor know you are working?" "How does the work differ from your normal job?"

Such practices discourage disabled people from using and developing valuable skills, yet no specific regulations call for them. They are irrelevant and completely out of order.

How to save money

Good business practice, which the Government is so keen to promote elsewhere, does not figure in social security.

For example, claimants are seen not as customers but as passive recipients. A huge burden of conditions is applied to them and recent "quality" measures are used in the processing of their claims.

But there are no measures of how effective benefits support is in helping people to take some control in their lives.

This is all backwards. But it need not be. I would suggest that the greatest efficiency saving of all would be to talk to people who depend on benefits about what a benefits system should be for. Then benefits would relate to what people want to do with their lives.

High on many people's agenda would be removing the very obstacles that make them dependent on benefits at all, such as access to work places.

This user-involvement, endorsed by the Government in other public services, might overcome an even greater psychological obstacle: the prejudice that requires benefits paid through social security to

be segregated from those paid through the tax system.

My mortgage interest relief is supposed to be a very different thing from "the social"; it's an incentive. Why can't social security support be an incentive too?

Various ways have been suggested from both sides of the political spectrum for unifying the tax and social security systems, and all have caused endless debate. I'm more concerned about the dreary short-sighted dogmatism which prevails in social security policy regardless of how many original ideas are around.

There is no solution to any of this unless the people seen as the "problem" are listened to. Questions like "However are we to pay for pensions?" or "How do we protect disabled people?" must go alongside others like, "What is a modern role for elders in society?" and "What support will enable disabled people to pursue the same goals as anyone else?"

Dave Gibbs is research manager at the Derbyshire Centre for Integrated Living. He welcomes readers' experiences that can be shared with others.

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Exercises to beat a taboo

Christine Norton on National Continence Day

Britain's third "National Continence Day" organised by the Department of Health and the Continence Foundation was held on 19 March.

Its theme this year was continence and childbirth. One in four women will experience incontinence (either bladder or bowel) at some time. For most, childbirth is a major factor.

The problem may start immediately after a baby is born, or it may take years to show, a common time being after the menopause. This is important to people with a disability, for whom, like Rachel Wilson (right), it is often assumed that any bladder or bowel problems are the result of that disability.

Sadly, continence problems remain a taboo subject for most people. Even the majority of people who are incontinent are too embarrassed to tell anyone. Many suffer in silence for years without seeking help.

Many women consider that leaking a little after having a baby is normal and only to be expected, and do not realise that anything can be done.

Get help early

This is a pity, because often things *can* be done, especially if help is sought before things get too bad. The months and years when children are small are an ideal time – women are often in frequent contact with health professionals, such as doctors, midwives and health visitors.

Unfortunately, many are either unaware of continence issues or do not have adequate knowledge. This year's day aimed to redress the balance with a conference, "Your baby, your bladder, your bowels" at London's Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Its purpose was to tell doctors, nurses, midwives and health visitors about the latest research and discuss prevention, early diagnosis and treatment.

It seems likely that it is the birth that does most damage. A baby's head causes tremendous stretching to the muscles of the pelvic floor. The bigger the baby, and the longer the birth (and use of forceps) all increase the likelihood of damage, both by stretching of the muscles and damage to the nerves, leading to a slow deterioration.

Supply of continence products remains a problem. Men who use sheaths or appliances and anyone who uses a catheter will have fewest problems, as nearly all of these are available on prescription. Supplies may need to be ordered a few days in advance though. Pads and other absorbent products, however, are supplied free via district nursing services. Each area chooses which products it will supply, what quantity and to whom. With financial restrictions becoming ever tighter, many areas are now rationing the number of pads they supply or supply cheaper pads which do not absorb so well. It is worth complaining if pads do not suit your needs. Some areas have been forced to change their policy when enough people complained.

Pelvic floor exercises can help to prevent problems and to treat them if they do arise. These are best done with professional supervision, as it is easy to do the wrong thing on your own. A physiotherapist or continence adviser can help you to make sure that you are not wasting your time.

The Continence Foundation and InconTact, 2 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2PH. A helpline is open Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm, tel: 0191-213 0050. Enuresis Resources and Information Centre (advice on children and bedwetting), 65 St Michael's Hill, Bristol BS2 8DZ, tel: (01179) 264920.

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Don't just grin and bear it

Your disability may not be to blame, finds new mum Rachel Wilson

For as long as I can remember, I have had poor bladder control. As I was growing up, it became accepted that if I laughed or coughed violently or had the misfortune to have a full bladder, I would wet myself.

Attention was never drawn to it; it was assumed that it was a consequence of my cerebral palsy and therefore inevitable.

This view was reinforced by the fact that many of my disabled friends had a similar problem. I bore it stoically, with irritation, but thought no more of it.

When I was pregnant with my first child, Rebecca, (DN October, 1995), every time she kicked, I lost control of my bladder. I had always avoided using continence pads or seeking advice. I suppose I was embarrassed. I would rather change frequently and deal with it privately than admit that this was a "continence problem".

Class revelation

Everything changed during one ante-natal class. One of the expectant mums asked about bladder control as she had started wetting herself. It was a revelation! Suddenly, "my" problem had a name – "stress incontinence".

I heard the midwife explain that it was common, particularly during pregnancy. I couldn't believe that this was something many people experienced and was not exclusively attributable to my disability. She showed the importance of pelvic floor exercises, using diagrams to explain the problem. I said I had a pre-existing problem and asked whether the exercises would still work. She said this meant it was even more important that I do them and seemed surprised that no one had suggested them before.

I left feeling enormously relieved. There was a solution, and even if my bladder control



Rachel Wilson and Rebecca: "Incontinence is a common problem"

BRIAN ALDRICH

remained a problem, it was not because of my disability, and so to be politely ignored! I took about my exercises with great gusto, although I found them difficult and frustrating. When I was pregnant, they had very little effect because of the pressure of the baby on my bladder. But since the birth, they have made a huge difference.

I do still have problems with

my bladder control, and will probably continue to do so, but the discovery of pelvic floor exercises is a great success. I have improved my bladder control by strengthening my muscles and have become more aware of when my bladder is full. Perhaps most importantly, I have also learnt not to be embarrassed by the problem: it is common after all!



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Customised couture

Clothing services can tailor affordable clothes to suit you, finds Hannah Crabtree



She means business: Anne Royston in one of her tailor-made suits

PAUL M BARKER

As a business woman, Anne Royston knows that clothes are very important.

"When I go to business meetings I need to look the part to be taken seriously."

Anne runs a disabled access consultancy. She is also a wheelchair user who has osteum fragilitis (or soft bones) so she can only wear made-to-measure clothing.

She has used Fashion Services for Disabled People in Bradford since 1980 and thinks that they offer invaluable help

to people with disabilities.

"Without the clothing service, I couldn't have set up the business I did."

"I guess you could say I was their guinea pig. I met Nellie Thornton, who was setting up Fashion Services through a friend. She began making up my clothes two months before the workshops opened."

"The clothes are not too expensive. They are on a par with high street stores such as Marks & Spencer. But I guess they could be a little pricey for

disabled people on low incomes.

Although clothing services aim to provide clothes that are competitively priced, they are tailor-made and do take time.

"I have learnt to plan ahead. As there is about an eight week wait, I have to work almost a season in advance. I often buy summer material in the autumn sales."

But it does not always take so long for outfits to be made. The service came to the rescue when Anne needed a dress for a wedding reception on a canal cruiser. "They made me a culotte dress at reasonably short notice. It was perfect for the occasion as I knew I would not expose myself getting on and off the boat!"

Awear is the national organisation that co-ordinates local clothing services. Its aim is to give disabled people access to fashionable and affordable clothes. There are centres in Nottingham, Bradford, Semington and two new centres have just opened in Manchester and Bristol.

Lynn Purcell, Awear's research and development worker says: "Our clothing services fill the gap between expensive tailor-made clothes on the one hand, and making do or going without fashionable clothes of your choice on the other."

"There is still a desperate need for a service in London and the south east. We would be keen to hear from anyone who would like to establish something."

If you don't have a clothing service in your area, you may find clothes to suit you in the Rolli-Moden catalogue. They have smart and casual wear designed for wheelchair users.

*Awear, tel: 0161-839 7399
Fashion Services for Disabled People, Bradford, tel: (01274) 597487*

*Bassetlaw Fashion Services, Retford, tel: (01777) 860206
Clothing Matters, Semington, tel: (01380) 878781
Suit Yourself, Bristol, tel: (01179) 653651
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Suitably attired, above: Rosie's bound to make an impression in an important meeting or job interview in this pale blue suit (modal/polyester, skirt £34.99, jacket £49.00, Next) worn with an apricot blouse (polyester, £19.99, Next).

Wedding guests, right: Rosie looks pretty in purple. She could outshine the bride in this two-piece (polyester/viscose, dress £44.99, jacket £64.99, Warehouse). Simon just needs a top hat to go with his tailor-made tails and shirt.

Party on dudes below: Rosie's ready to go to, or even host, a party in this beautiful blue patterned dress (viscose, £39.99, Warehouse). Simon will be celebrating in style in his tailor-made tuxedo and shirt.

Dress

Are you looking forward



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ed for success

In an important day? Alison Miller finds out what you should be wearing.



JAMIE FACER

A night at the theatre below: Dan in navy trousers (cotton, £34.99, Next), shirt (cotton, £15.99, C&A), jacket (wool, £110, C&A). Rosie in a gold shirt (polyamide/elastane, £34.99) and skirt (viscose, £36.99, both Warehouse).



Whatever the occasion, you can make it special if you wear the right clothes. *DN* asked three models to test some outfits they might wear to make an important day go well.

Ready to try anything, Dan Batten took time out from his job as receptionist for Scope in London and found he was a natural in front of the camera.

For a night out, he normally wears a black t-shirt, jeans and a leather jacket "I'm just a slob really," he confessed.

Dan has cerebral palsy. He liked the navy trousers and blue top as they were easy to pull on and free from fussy fastenings. "They felt really comfortable."

So could he be persuaded to change from his usual grunge gear? "I'd wear these clothes if they were bought for me," he said, "but I wouldn't buy them myself." He thought the sunglasses were pretty cool, though, and his favourite item was the red jacket from Next. "If I bought anything it'd be that."

Rosie Blake was one of the finalists in *DN/Sunrise Medical's Model in a Million* competition two years ago and now poses for the camera professionally.

Her favourite colour is purple, so she went wild over the suit from Warehouse. "It's easy to get into and fits so well." She especially liked the length of the jacket. "Cropped jackets are really good for me." They hang well sitting down and there is less chance of them creasing.

Simon Minty got suited and booted in a few outfits he'd had made. He has restricted growth so it is difficult buying dressy clothes off the peg. "It really limits your choice."

Some high street stores such as Next advertise a made-to-measure service, but Simon has found this isn't quite what it seems. "It's not really made-to-measure. As long as you fit a certain amount of standard things you're okay." But he has bought children's ties from Next and buys some shirts in the high street that he has shortened.

Simon's tuxedo and tails were made by Youngs, the suit hire company. He has also used a tailor called Smartwear. They cater for a lot of Jewish functions and have suits in children's sizes intended for barmitzvahs which can be adapted. This can be cheaper than having them made from scratch. Your local Jewish tailor may be able to offer a similar service.

Smartwear tel: 0181-806 4145



An important date, above: Dan puts the competition in the shade in these chinos (cotton, £29.99, C&A), pale blue top (cotton/polyester, £19.99) and red jacket (cotton/nylon, £39.99, Next). Sunglasses from Next (£14.99).

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For an information pack and application form, contact Clare Finlow on 01925 570962 or write to the address below. Information is available in large print and on audio cassette.

Deadline of receipt of applications is 30 May 1996. Final interviews will be held over a period of two days in mid-summer.

Previous award holders include:

- James Partridge – founding director of Changing Faces
- Damian Barry – Director of Training, Friends for the Young Deaf
- Susan Daniels – Chief Executive, National Deaf Children's Association
- Peter Mansell – Chief Executive, Spinal Injuries Association

The Coverdale Organisation Plc, St James Court, Wilderspool Causeway, Warrington WA4 6PS, tel: 01925 570962, fax: 01925 570963.

Speak up and make yourself heard

Your GP may now purchase communication aids. Will that be a help? Janet Larcher explains.

From 1 April, all GPs will be allowed to purchase communication aids for their patients, according to a new Department of Health guideline.

But no new money and no voucher scheme, will be available, Health Minister John Bowis told a meeting of communication aid users, speech and language therapists (S<S), manufacturers and charities in February.

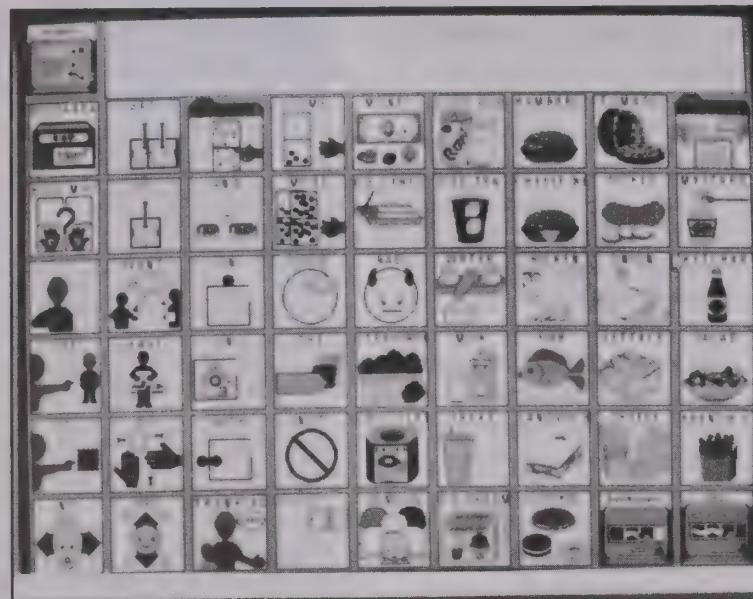
Instead, he has asked for examples of communication aid services commissioned jointly by the local health, education, employment and social services authorities. And he hopes GPs will be able to set up referral and funding procedures to help solve problems which were revealed in a national survey last December.

The survey, organised by the charity Communication Matters, involved more than 100 S<S and teachers of children with communication disabilities. It found there was a lack of money for communication aids and a lack of information about how to obtain funding.

Many teachers said they had to make one-off purchases and wasted time going to health, social services and education authorities, being refused, and then having to start fundraising.

The survey also found that many health authorities raise expectations by funding assessments, and even loaning equipment on trial, only to say no to purchasing it. In some cases, over two years passed before the recommendation became provision, or people had given up, or died.

Teachers in the survey said that, without proper training and support, people were likely to abandon their communication aids in a cupboard. Also, it was important to include funding for training and on-going support.



Want a hamburger plain, or with cheese? Select from your Dnavox 2.

A ridiculous distinction

As communication aids become more integrated, the continued distinction between "social communication aid", traditionally the responsibility of the health authority, and "education communication aid", supplied by the education authority, becomes more ridiculous.

Communication aids enable someone to work (word processing, accounting, technical drawing, graphics, etc); to record school/college work; to access information via CD-ROM, Internet and e-mail; to move around their environment in their powered chairs; to control their domestic environment (open doors and windows, change the TV channel), and talk to others face-to-face or over the phone, fax or e-mail.

Health, social services and education authorities should be working together to develop joint strategies and commissioning procedures for assistive technology, not approaching each case as a one-off or resorting to inter-agency "buck-passing".

The minister's request for

examples of good practice is a step in the right direction.*

Another impractical split

The new guidelines exclude environmental controls from equipment GPs may purchase – at a time when manufacturers are striving to integrate communication, environmental control and wheelchair control in a single device so that a person with complex disabilities can control their environment.

For the moment, the minister says he will monitor the guidelines before making any changes.

Which communication aid?

If you are about to leap off to your GP to request a prescription for a communication aid, be aware that there are several different types available.

There are amplifiers and artificial larynxes for people who have had throat surgery, and voice output communication aids (VOCAs) for people with severe speech difficulties.

VOCAs have different types of voice – "digitised", which sounds like tape recorded speech, or "synthesised" which sounds slightly robotic. What they say can be based on letters

and words or pictures or icons.

The simplest, most portable aids have one to 20 digitised messages. Recording is quick and easy so they can be changed to suit the situation. AbleNet's BIGmack (from Liberator) is a 5in, brightly coloured switch which allows you to give one four-second message. The Voicemate series (Cambridge Adaptive Communication) has four messages each of 20 seconds, selected directly or via switches. Voicepal (QED) and SpeakEasy (Ablenet) offer ten and 12 messages respectively, whereas Messagemate (Cambridge Adaptive Communication) has five or 20 messages. All can be operated directly or via switches.

Other aids in the category are Echo 4 (Sandwell Special Needs Project), the Spokesman series with one, two, four, eight or 16 locations (Toby Churchill) and the Parrot (QED).

A range of communication aids, which can grow with you, offers one to 128 locations, several minutes of digitised speech and/or unlimited synthesised speech. Some offer over 128 messages by requiring you to select between levels of message as well as the message location. Others provide the option to combine locations to produce a different message.

Some have digitised speech, such as Macaw (QED, Easiads or Toby Churchill) and DeltaTalker (Liberator); others only synthetic speech, such as The Liberator (Liberator), VOIS 160 (PC Werth). A few have both digitised and synthesised speech, such as ORAC (Mardis), DeltaTalker and AlphaTalker (Liberator).

All the devices in this category, except the VOIS 160, can be operated directly or via switches; The Liberator, AlphaTalker and ORAC also by

an optical headpointer.

While individual words or complete messages stored in these devices can be selected via letters or words, it is more typical to select messages via icons, symbols or pictures. Nonetheless, even when whole messages or words are being selected via icons, the Liberator, DeltaTalker and ORAC can give you access to a spelling mode of operation to allow you to speak words or phrases for which there is no direct access code.

Some communication aids are accessed solely through text, either by typing each letter at a small keyboard, or through two-to-three letter combinations used as a shortcut to regularly used phrases.

These systems also offer word predictions to reduce the number of keystrokes needed to write a sentence, and to speed up sentence production.

The software used in these systems can be used on an ordinary computer, but a desktop is not portable and portable computers are not very robust. The Cameleon (Cambridge Adaptive Communication) running EZkeys is a robust computer; so is the palm-sized Lightwriter (Toby Churchill).

If you want access to a wide vocabulary, all these systems require literacy and typing ability, or memory of many codes or combinations of icons.

The latest idea uses a "dynamic screen" instead. You are presented with a set of category icons. Selecting one causes the screen to offer items in that category. So, if the first icon selected was food, the display would change to show snacks, fruit, sweets, breakfast main meal. If fruit was selected then different fruits would be shown. If apple, the aid might say: "Can I have an apple please?"

Dynavox 2 (Dynamic Abilities) and the Cameleon running Talking Screen software use this system.

All these aids have advantages and disadvantages, so do seek independent advice from someone knowledgeable, ideally a specialist communication aids centre, and make sure you are given training.

* If you have any examples (or would like a list of addresses), contact DN, address and phone number on page 2. Dr Janet Larcher is a consultant on microtech aids for disabled people.



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CLARE RAYNER, PETER WHITE (BBC disability affairs correspondent)

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Film

Michael Turner



A group of New Yorkers tell stories about their lives in *Smoke* (selected cinemas from 19 April).

The characters, including several disabled people, move to the forefront, then return to the background in different stories. Cyrus (Forest Whitaker) takes centre stage when Rashide, the son he abandoned as a baby, comes looking for him.

Little is made of Cyrus' disability except when he explains how he was drunk at the wheel in the car crash that killed Rashide's mother and led to his disability. He says the crash was a punishment from God, and his artificial arm serves as a constant reminder of past mistakes.

This is curiously contradicted by the way Cyrus comes across as a happy, confident character. He has remarried, has a second son, and is running his own garage. He is anything but a broken man.

In another strand of the film,

Smoke and fire



Past imperfect: Rashid (Harold Perrineau) confronts his long-lost father Cyrus (Forest Whitaker)

Auggie (Harvey Keitel) is surprised by the return of an old girlfriend (Stockard Channing). She wears an eye patch, but apart from some banter about the fate of the glass eye she used to have, her disability is not mentioned.

It's arguable that *Smoke* uses

disability to highlight aspects of the characters: Cyrus' arm as a sign of guilt; Ruby's patch for lack of perception. But given the quality of the rest of the film, director Wayne Wang seems beyond such crude metaphors.

At worst, he is too interested in his characters to let them be

dominated by symbolism. At best, he sees that in presenting a slice of life in *Smoke*, disability is simply a part of life.

As ever, the old chestnut about non-disabled performers arises. Surely we can't be the only ones to notice that Cyrus' "artificial" arm is longer than his real one?

Theatre

It is 27 years since the Who's Pete Townshend created his rock opera *Tommy*.

A film version and the split up of the Who have passed by, but *Tommy* has outlived all.

Featuring the rock classic "Pinball Wizard", this latest production at the Shaftesbury Theatre, London, is bound to be a success with ageing rockers and a wider West End crowd.

But this show will have those of a politically correct disposition foaming at the mouth.

Tommy (Paul Keating) becomes blind, deaf and dumb



after his parents tell him to forget that he saw his father kill his mother's lover.

Abuse at the hands of relatives and cruel children follow, and dad takes *Tommy* to be made whole by the Acid Queen, a drug-addicted prostitute – thankfully, he changes his mind.

Tommy spends much of his time staring into a mirror, apparently self-absorbed but encompassing a universal

knowledge. Sickness takes his mind where it would not normally go, we are told.

Only when Tommy shows his knack for pinball does the world take notice.

But mum and dad, tired of the strain of bringing up a disabled kid, have decided they can't cope. Mum (Kim Wilde) smashes the mirror and Tommy regains his senses and sings "I'm free," equating freedom with normality. Then he leaves home.

The world's adulation multiplies after this "miracle", but it appears people want to share *Tommy*'s pain rather than learn that the true "miracle" is having all your faculties. A disenchanted public rejects him and leaves him to make up with his parents in this version – changed to a family saga from the sixties story of spiritual dereliction.

As *Tommy*, passively rocking back and forth, is abused and exploited literally, the concept of disability is exploited dramatically. All the stereotypes are here: wicked Uncle Ernie with a limp, *Tommy* the disabled prodigy with other-worldly senses, the delicious fantasy of the miracle cure.

Musically fun, with some great special effects and pyrotechnics, but unenlightened to say the least.

Rod Hermiston

Dance

Sinking Dreams

Dance company High Spin tells the epic story of the Titanic. With acclaimed choreographer Laurie Booth collaborating, I had high hopes for *Sinking Dreams*.

It started well. The dancers, with and without learning difficulties, performed a beautiful sequence of moving stills. The period costumes and set gave a real feeling of the time.

But the rest was disappointing. A story like this demands a sense of emergency. But the pace never

rose above slow motion and the dancers weren't given the chance to express the drama of the situation. The choreography was basic, repetitive and over careful.

Laurie Booth chose to work way under his, and the company's, capacity. If this was because the company included people with learning difficulties, it was not only detrimental to the performance, but also to the standing of disability arts.

The company were well rehearsed and gave a polished performance. But the content was uninspiring. I left frustrated and felt the company had much more to give.

Kirsteen Knight

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Television

Chris Davies



I have the greatest respect for Lord (Jack) Ashley and no quarrel with his involvement with *See Hear*. But he is the wrong person to host the chat show edition.

The first time he did it last year, the programme had no sign language. This year's (BBC1 3 March) guests could mainly lip read and speak like him. His predecessor, Clive Mason, had a mixture. But even if the majority were sign language users like Clive, this would have been more desirable. *See Hear* has veered too far into the hard of hearing/acquired deafness section of the community. I know sign language users are a minority, but sign language still needs to be recognised officially in Britain. If programmes like *See Hear* don't champion its cause, who will?

The theatre is full of traditions – saying "break a leg" instead of "good luck", or "the Scottish play" for "Macbeth". Let me introduce you to another – "the Poultry Company". This group of non-disabled and disabled performers appeared on *The Lawrence Olivier Awards* (BBC2 19 Feb). They performed a customarily emotive song called "We Need Each Other". Though the camera emphasised those who were obviously disabled, it was clear the majority are not. I don't know about needing each other, but it strikes me that Chicken Shed needs disabled people for its existence only to deny them equality. Oh, darn it, I mentioned their name.

Talking of superficial matters, as a fan of science fiction I watch *The New Adventures of Superman*. In "Ordinary People" (BBC1 24 Feb), the plot centred around a villain who wanted to exchange his own body, encased in a wheelchair type contraption, with Clark Kent's. Two things strike me about this. First, I hope Christopher Reeve didn't see it. Second, the main point about this retelling of the Superman legend is to modernise it in terms of nineties gender politics. So what happened to disability political correctness? True, the villain didn't talk much about his impairment, and what he moved around in was suitably un-wheelchair-like in its appearance. Nevertheless, the tradition survives of associating evil with deformity. Not nineties at all.

A walk on the wild side

Ornithologist Peter Montgomery wings his way round Whisby Nature Park in Lincoln

My favourite walk is around the Whisby Nature Park, just off the A46 Lincoln by-pass. Whisby is not far from home so I can make up my mind to visit at short notice, depending on the weather and how I am feeling that day.

Last time I went it was the second day of bright sunshine, after a long, cold, snowy winter. So, after lunch I put on my warm clothes and headed off.

After a very active working life I took early retirement when I became a wheelchair user. My hobbies were, and still are, travel, oil painting and ornithology. If you have never thought of studying birds then I hope by reading this it might encourage you to. You only need a pocket-sized bird field guide and a pair of binoculars to get started.

Countryside conserved

Whisby Nature Park is the ideal place to study birds. It is 160 acres of lakes, ponds, woodland, scrub and grassland. The park was established by the Lincolnshire Trust for Nature Conservation, with county and district councils, and support from the Countryside Commission.

I decided to concentrate on just one of the five lakes in the park – Grebe Lake. The path was a bit muddy in places, but



Park life: you can take a diversion from the main path to the picturesque Orchid Glade

certainly not bad enough to stop me getting around on my own in my manual wheelchair.

On the way from the car park greenfinches, bullfinches and wrens flitted about in the hedgerows. Whisby is also a good place to see one of my favourite birds on a bright winter's day – the tree sparrow. These birds have beautiful chestnut coloured heads instead

of the grey of the more common house sparrow.

By the time I reached the first bird hide, I was ready for a rest and this was a good stopping place. The hide has been designed with wheelchair users in mind. Access is easy and there is a section at one end where you can remain in a wheelchair and look out of the low viewing window across the

lake. For those who are more able, it is relatively easy to transfer to the benches.

This is an ideal spot for beginners to study many species of wild duck and waterfowl. They remain in view for a long time and it is relatively easy to identify them.

There was a good selection of ducks including mallard, tufted duck, pochard, wigeon, gadwall,

teal and my favourite at this time of year, smew and goldeneye.

A pair of Canada geese panicked as they came in to land on the water when they discovered their landing area was still frozen. Meanwhile a couple of cormorants flew overhead while the coots and moorhens chased each other.

It was time to move on. Two other hides at the lake side are also accessible, but are only suitable for people who can transfer to bench seats.

Off the beaten track

The next part of the walk runs between the lake and the railway line, with good views over woodland. Sadly there was no sign of wintering waxwings which have been present in one of the largest invasions of this country for many years.

There is an option to leave the main circuit around the lake to visit the Orchid Glade. I would strongly recommend this, but help may be needed on a couple of steep slopes. But there is a fairly easy route doubling back near the railway bridge. This is a very attractive area and I intend to return in May or June to do some oil painting there.

After leaving the Orchid Glade, the path passes between Grebe Lake and Coot Lake and then back along the original path. By now the sun was beginning to sink lower and there were some of the most beautiful colours you could wish to see. The duck egg blue sky with a light green tint towards the horizon was brought to life with a few billowy clouds tinged with



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Pastime paradise: country lover Peter Montgomery

orange, pale yellow and purple. This, with the reflections of the white silver birches, red-tipped willows, bright green tufts of grass and light straw coloured reed beds, was magic. A flock of redwings overhead, in the setting sun, made an even more impressive sight. A perfect end to a perfect day.

*Whisby Nature Park
tel: (01522) 500676.*

Barrier-free Design: a manual for building designers and managers
By James Holmes-Siedle £29.99, Heineman Publishers

This new manual deals with the usual aspects of design specifications to give disabled people barrier-free access to the built environment.

The difference is that it offers a complete package of information from an

understanding of the medical and social models of disability to a choice of detailed costings on installing an accessible toilet.

It considers all aspects of designing for disabled people: lighting, colour contrast, signage and symbols. Manual and technical communication are explained with the same care as physical access.

It is aimed at architects, students, disabled people and planners.



Because this work is mainly autobiographical, interspersed with case studies based on the author's own experience plus known guidelines and recommended standards, the whole work lacks the strength of the philosophical introduction:

"The fundamental vision of this book is that everyone should be enabled by the built environment. A building that is accessible and staffed by people who welcome those from all walks of life will draw the best

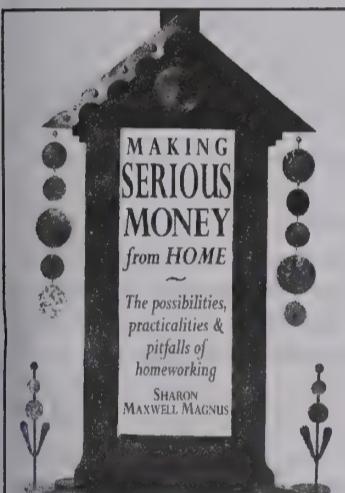
out of society."

Even so, non-professionals will gain from the manual the need to view the whole picture when designing barrier-free environments. The author's experiences will confirm the view many disabled people hold, that there are commonsense ways of implementing accessible environments. And the manual will go a long way to changing professional attitudes.

Dave Allcock

Book news

Making Serious Money from Home: the possibilities, practicalities and pitfalls of home-working, by Sharon Maxwell Magnus, has information about what type of work you can do, how to set up an office plus experiences of people who have done it. £6.99 from Pan Books, 25 Eccleston Place, London SW1W 9NF, tel: 0171-881 8000.



In *The Fats we Need to Eat*, Jeanette Ewin differentiates between good and bad fats in your diet. £6.99 from Harper Collins, 77-85 Fulham Palace Road, Hammersmith, London W6 8JBB, tel: 0181-741 7070.

Regaining Potency: the answer to male impotence, by Oliver Gillie, tackles this often taboo subject in a concise way and offers practical solutions. £6.75 from Self-Help Direct Publishing, PO Box 9035, London N12 8ED.

Alzheimer's Challenged and Conquered? is Louis Blank's personal account of his recovery from the condition. He claims to have been cured by a chelation process that removed aluminium from the brain. £8.99 from Azwee Lykit, 43 Molyneux Street, Rochdale, Lancs OL12 6QA, tel: (01706) 42233.

Home at Last is about the experiences of two disabled people with learning difficulties who got a home of their own with 24 hour care. £14.95 from Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 116 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JB, tel: 0171-833 2307.

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A host of golden daffodils: Sister Elly Maria's garden is filled with colour and life all year round

Reaping

Veggies are versatile, says Sister Elly Maria

I am a severely disabled woman with limited movement in my arms and hands, and none in my legs. I use an electric wheelchair. Eight years ago, I moved from a London flat to my beautiful house in Newent

in Gloucestershire, and began to think about gardening.

I never had the privilege of a garden before, although house plants have always been part of my life. During my first years here I was not able to do anything because of illness, but in the last couple of years things have come together.

With the help of friends and a generous grant from the Gardening for the Disabled Trust, I had some raised beds, a Japanese-style pond and a greenhouse put in.

I also have what I call my "Wendy house". This is a mini greenhouse inside the house that I use to start the seeds off in January.

I don't do all the work myself. I grow the seeds, pricking out and potting on, while friends and enablers plant.

My philosophy is try to find out what you can do and don't dwell on what you can't. I can no longer do weeding, so when I designed the garden I made sure there was no grass. I have a path, flagstones and gravel, but most areas are taken up with plants. I have either grown them from seeds or cuttings, or they have been gifts. It doesn't cost a lot once you get started. I save my own seeds from the annuals.

"Being outside, sitting or pottering can be just as satisfying as walking the hills or whatever else you think you want to do"

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A pond can make a colourful addition to your garden

the rewards

Pantekoek. Fresh spinach looks good on your plate and your patio.



Planting for the future: Sister Elly Maria and friend sowing aubergines, tomatoes and cucumbers

gardening, but soon learn. One previous enabler is now studying horticulture and landscape/environment at university after her experience here.

Last year we made a raised bed by the side of the house for a kitchen garden.

It had always been my dream to have a garden where I could grow my own flowers for the house and vegetables and growing them is great fun. One of my enablers sowed some carrots and she was so thrilled with them she took photographs to send home to Denmark. We are still eating vegetables from last year, with a new lot already sown.

As a member of the Heritage Seed Library, I have learnt a lot about not using insecticides or the like, and the veggies taste much better. It is great to be able to decide what you want for dinner and then simply go to the garden and pick it.

In *Gardener's World* magazine they recently showed how to grow vegetables on a "desktop", proving you don't need a lot of space to have a good selection. I start a lot off in seed trays. Empty toilet rolls make good seed pots, and the roots don't get disturbed. You then have strong plants by the time they go outside. I also put fleece down to warm the soil. Fleece is very light and easy to handle and it brings results much earlier.

The first thing I do in the morning is go round the garden removing slugs and snails. This is very important as they are

really hungry and especially like the young plants. Lettuce is their favourite. The birds like it here as well. There are usually about 20 around my bird table.

I grow delicate plants in my greenhouse, but there are plenty of varieties of tomato, cucumber and pepper that you can grow outside in a sheltered spot.

Vegetables make your garden look good too. They can often

be just as attractive as flowers.

I didn't have a clue when I started gardening. I just followed my instincts in the design and listened to the advice of seasoned gardeners.

If something doesn't work out, I just change it when the time comes. My garden is far from perfect, but with a lot of perseverance and patience it is improving.



Greens, glorious greens: the beginnings of the kitchen garden

Tools don't have to be expensive. I often use things that were originally intended for something totally different. Plastic sticks that come with shirts make excellent frames to nurture cuttings and seedlings.

A large bottle of sunflower oil becomes a mini greenhouse, or cloche. I've made a cold frame with old bricks and glass, and an old plastic barrel sawn in half is now a large pot and a little pond, adding extra colour to my driveway.

Collecting seeds in old envelopes gives me a start for next year and the old compost from pots and grow bags goes back on the garden. Nothing is ever wasted.

I have made mistakes in planting perennials, but they can be moved. Always follow your intuition. When I found a clematis was dying at the front of the house I moved it to the back and cut it right down

at totally the wrong time of the year according to the experts. Now new shoots have developed and the plant is flourishing.

Always be patient. Four years ago I sowed some passionflower seeds. They grew into lovely plants, but had no flowers. Last summer they finally produced flowers and even fruit.

The most important thing is to enjoy what you have got. Being outside, sitting or pottering, can be as satisfying as walking the hills or whatever else you think you want to do but cannot.

I spend hours watching the birds in my garden. The feel of the earth, watching the seeds grow and caring for them is just as important as being in charge of some large operation.

Gardens are always beautiful if you are willing to see it. Even when it is dark and cold there is enjoyment to be had from them.

Gardening for the Disabled Trust, tel: (01580) 852249

Heritage Seed Library, tel: (01203) 303517

The Society for Horticultural Therapy offers consultancy and training services. They also produce *Growth Point*, a quarterly magazine covering all aspects of gardening for people with disabilities. Horticultural Therapy, Goulds Ground, Vallis Way, Frome, Somerset BA11 3DW, tel: (01373) 464782.

The Federation to Promote Horticulture for Disabled People develops training and education programmes. Contact them at the Thorngrove Centre, Common Mead Lane, Gilliingham, Dorset SP8 4RE, tel: (01747) 822242.

Look out for a local gardeners' club. The Country Gardeners' Club in Chigwell, Essex, for example, has a site where disabled and elderly people can grow their own flowers and vegetables free from pesticides. Membership is £2. Tools and training are provided. Contact Fred Pendley, 70 Brocket Way, Chigwell, Essex IG7 4ES, tel: 0181-501 0192.

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You don't need to be an expert to grow plants. You don't even need a garden. It's amazing what can be achieved with a container or two on a small patio or balcony. Many are now self-watering so that solves another problem.

There is a large selection available and most can be found in garden centres, superstores and high-street shops. Prices vary, but if you pay more, they will usually last for years. Real terracotta costs much more and you must ensure pots are frost proof.

Here are a few names to look out for in the imitation ranges: Metro make a large planter, 20in in diameter. This incorporates their unique self-watering system which consists



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Dept DN, Wistlandpound, Kentisbury Barnstaple, North Devon EX31 4SJ

How does your garden grow?



No experience? No space? No problem says Anne Davies. All you need is a little help.

of a capillary mat that draws water up from the reservoir below, reducing the need to water to just once a week. Also in this range are hanging baskets and window boxes. Colours are green, terracotta or stone. I've grown "tumbler" tomatoes in the large planter with lettuce. But one of my most successful buys was the Metro Wigwam which stands on the patio. It is 2ft in diameter, 11½in deep and has 6ft poles fitting into a cap top. When I sowed with a mix of fragrant sweet peas and runner beans in a good compost, I not only enjoyed the perfume of the flowers, but was able to pick a handful of beans each day.

The Plantpak Manhattan containers are ideal for a corner. Four pots of different heights planted with a variety of evergreens and annuals will give pleasure all year. They are more expensive but should last almost a lifetime. £42 for four. They come in terracotta, pampas, ash and white.

Shrubs and fruit trees will thrive in large containers too providing they have good



Cut down on the hard work with Metro's self watering planter

drainage and are fed and watered. Ken Muir Nurseries have Minarette fruit trees (apples, pears, plums) that can be obtained mail order. A camellia or hardy azalea planted in acid free compost will give pleasure for years. Mine have lasted for nearly 15 in the same pot. Tel: (01255) 830181.

Watering need not be a chore. Plantpak have a Pumpcan for £10. This is an effortless way to water hanging baskets up to 7in high. Tel: (01621) 740140. The Hilo device from Parfox acts like a pulley, so the basket can be lowered for watering. £5, tel: (01942) 726862.

Even easier are the granules you can put in the pot with the compost. Glowcroft are just one of the manufacturers. They make Swellgel (water-storing granules) and Basketmate containing controlled fertiliser and water-storing granules. Tel: (01452) 731300.

All garden centres and most supermarkets sell grow bags. Mine was only 99p from Asda. Planted with three tomato plants, you can look forward to pounds of fruit.

Special offer

Buy two of Anne's books for the price of one! *Cook it Yourself* and *Grow it Yourself* cost £4.99 + 56p p&c from Berrydale Publishers, 5 Lawn Road, London NW3 2XS.

Combisystem is similar. They are quick to lock up, with a square knob on the handles for fixing the many tool heads. Tel: (01462) 475000.

If you have difficulty bending, try the Never-bend range from Spear and Jackson. There are tools with extra long handles. Tel: (01142) 449911.

Boots' Active and Independent catalogue shows the Peta range of Fist Grip hand tools which could be invaluable if you have weak wrists. Also featured are hand tools with chunky rubber, easy grip handles. The catalogue is available from Boots at £1.

I like to grow my tomatoes, geraniums and petunias from seed on my window sill, but if I'm not careful I make an awful mess potting up. Now the problem has been solved with a fold away work tidy from Glowcroft. PVC-covered with rigid 6in sides and 4 sq ft of space. I can even use it on my draining board.

Be it in a tub, window box or a garden, there's nothing like the pleasure you get from picking a few flowers, lettuce and radishes or eating sweet, bite-sized tomatoes warmed by the sun saying "I grew them myself."



Take the strain: Peta's fist grip fork with arm support

Hannah Crabtree looks at some of nature's remedies

Most of us only think of using herbs to add taste to a bland casserole. But think again, herbs can treat complaints from acne to arthritis.

Herbalism is often regarded as "alternative" treatment, but it is the oldest form of medicine known to man, and has been practised all over the world for centuries. 80 per cent of the world's population rely on herbs for health.*

Herbalists have a holistic approach to medicine, aiming to restore balance to the body. When the body is in harmony, it is more able to fight infection.

Dr Stephen Church, a qualified herbalist, says: "A herbalist's diagnosis is more to do with the individual than a conventional doctor's."

"Although over-the-counter herbal remedies are better than drugs, herbalists deal with each patient's treatment individually, to provide a specific remedy."

Elizabeth Shaw, a patient of Dr Church's, had severe asthma for 50 years and spent a year at London's Royal Brompton Hospital. Dr Church weaned her off ventolin with a herbal remedy, so that eventually she didn't need medication at all.

She has not had an attack for over a year. "It has changed my life completely" she says. "If I have to take ventolin in an emergency, it will be more effective because I do not take

Herbs for health



Aromatic arrangement: herbs can add decoration to your home too

it regularly. I am no longer tied to my GP and have much more control over my life."

Herbalism does not guarantee miracle cures. It may have worked for Chinese emperors and the ancient Greeks, but always tell your GP first and keep him or her informed of the remedies you are taking.

The Herb Society, 134 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SA, tel: 0171-823 5583. The British Herbal Medicine Association, Sun House, Church Street, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 1JL, tel: (01453) 751402. Dr Stephen Church tel: 0181-660 0425.

Going back to her roots

For Maggie Iles from Camden, herbalism offers a different way to treat her disabilities.

Maggie has recurrent thrombosis, which causes blood clotting. She also has ulcers on her ankle and back problems.

"As someone who has been in and out of hospital for years, I realise how easy it is to feel that you can't do anything to make yourself better," she says.

"But herbal medicine has changed all that. It educated me and made me more independent. I became more aware of what was going on in my body."

"I was taking anti-coagulants to stop my blood clotting and a lot of other orthodox drugs.

"Things just weren't going right. I was besides myself with pain. I was given hydrocortisone for my ulcers but the side-effects almost made it worse. I had to find an alternative.

"I'd always been interested in complementary therapies. When a friend of mine recommended a herbalist, I had try him.

"The herbal treatment for hyper thyroid growth was wonderful. The hospital suggested radio therapy, but I didn't want it unless my condition was life threatening."

Though she uses herbal remedies, Maggie still takes some conventional medicines. She always tries to find a herbal

alternative to pharmaceutical drugs but sees it as a matter of finding compromises.

"Herbal remedies are not always reliable; you have to try them out and see which work for you. If you still have to take conventional medicines, herbs can sometimes help to relieve their side effects."

Because there are so many herbs with different therapeutic qualities it is important to see a well trained herbalist. Herbs have the power to harm as well as heal.

The best way to find a reputable herbalist is to call the British Herbal Medicine Association, who will give you a list of registered members in your area.

Maggie says of her herbalist Christopher Hedley, "He really knows his stuff. He knows how herbs will work on their own and also with the conventional medicines I have to take. Chris' remedies are specially formulated to suit me."

She thinks herbalism can be important to disabled people, especially those with on-going complaints. If she has to take medicines on a long-term basis, she would rather be putting "something good" into her body.

"Since going to a herbalist I feel in all respects better than I was. Herbalism has taught me to listen to my body and have a more positive attitude to treating my disabilities."

Trying it out

For minor ailments, herbs can offer a natural alternative: Common cold: as well as vampires, garlic can ward off a cold. Rosehip tea, high in vitamin C, can build up resistance to infection.

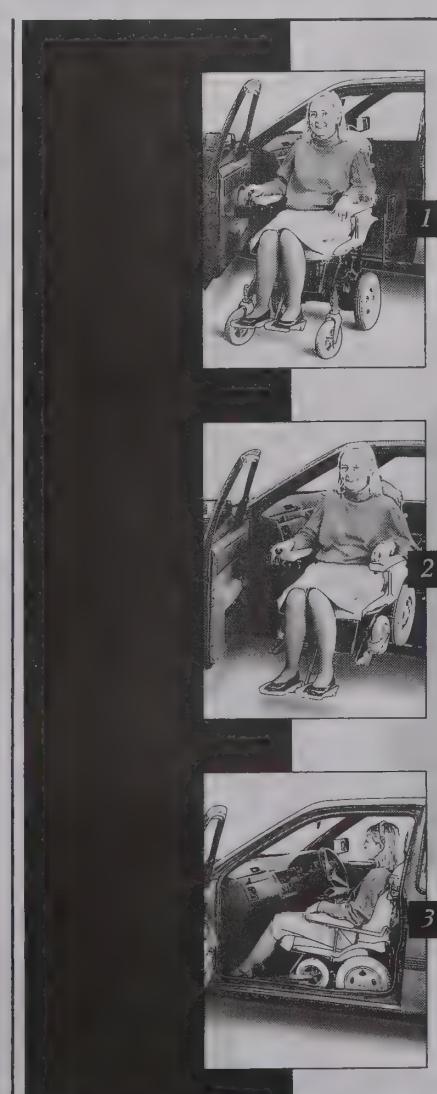
Depression: lavender flower infusion can be an effective pick-me-up, especially combined with rosemary.

Digestion: most flavouring and seasoning herbs stimulate the digestive juices: rosemary helps the digestion of fatty lamb; fennel helps the body digest oily fish.

Insomnia: camomile tea is a traditional relaxing bedtime drink. Passion flower tea can also help you sleep.

If you can't grow your own, many herbs are available on the high street. Culpeper and Neal's Yard have a wide range and can be found in most cities.

*Remedies from DK Pocket Encyclopedia - Herbs by Lesley Bremness, £7.99, Dorling Kindersley.



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Info

The Reel Guide has information about access to London's cinemas. It describes the number of steps, wheelchair spaces, induction loops, admittance of guide dogs and more. Available in print or on tape. £2 from Artsline, Chalton Street, London NW1 1HS, tel: 0171-388 2227.

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Disability Discrimination Act: a guide for colleges, universities, education authorities and training providers has been produced by Skill, the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities. £4 from Skill, 336 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AA, tel/minicom: 0171-274 0565.

Devising and resourcing personal care packages is a guide aimed at local authorities. £4.50 from the Disablement Income Group, Unit 5, Archway Business Centre, 19-23 Wedmore Street, London N19 4RZ, tel: 0171-263 3981.

ICIS is a freephone information service for disabled people in West Sussex. Co-ordinated by the Queen Elizabeth Foundation, it provides information on

services and support in the community. Tel: (0800) 859929.

Dealing with Bereavement: a curriculum pack for youth workers has been produced by the National Youth Agency. £14.99 from Sales Department, National Youth Agency, 17-23 Albion Street, Leicester LE1 6GD, tel: (01162) 856789.

Self Employment: a positive option: a guide for disabled people is a new booklet from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation. Turn your business ideas into reality. £2.50 from RADAR, 12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London EX1V 8AF, tel: 0171-250 3222, minicom: 0171-250 4119.

Congratulations!

P Booth from Nottingham, R Elkin from Brighton, S Jeewa from Northampton, D O'Callahan from London and Y Laibi from London win copies of *Blackstone's Guide to the Disability Discrimination Act*. P Lancaster from Newton Abbot, H Seed from Preston, R Elkin from Brighton, E Reid from Oldham, R Labrum from South Shields, S Jones from Walsall, D Morris from London, H Etchells from Worcester Park, Y Laibi from London and J Hayes from Berkhamsted all win the *Which? Hotel Guide 1996*.

What's on

The Northern Disability Arts Forum AGM and disability cabaret on 28 March in Newcastle upon Tyne. Admission free. For more information contact NORDAF, MEA House, Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8XS, tel: 0191-222 0708, minicom: 0191-261 2238.

Breaking the Mould, a play about genetic science, performed by actors with learning disabilities, is on tour from 1 April. The Strathcona Theatre Company is also holding drama workshops for people with learning disabilities. For details of both tel: 0171-403 9316.

The Computability Centre, a charity offering disabled people advice in using modern technology, is holding an open day in Newcastle on 17 April. Contact them at PO Box 94, Warwick, Warwickshire CV34 5WS, tel: (01926) 312847.

A conference about information technology and employment for disabled people on 26 April in Belfast. Contact Jane Craig, PHAB Northern Ireland, 26 Alexandra Gardens, Belfast, N Ireland BT15 3LJ, tel: (01232) 370240.

Video top five

1. DIE HARD WITH A VENGEANCE

(Touchstone): Bruce Willis cheats mortality again.

2. WATERWORLD (CIC): Costner's epic spending spree.

3. USUAL SUSPECTS (Polygram): complex criminal caper.

4. CONGO (CIC): Jungle adventure from the makers of Jurassic Park.

5. BAD BOYS (20/20): Two cops in search of call girl killer. (N)

Closed captions
(N) No captions
Chart supplied by MIRB

Memorial service

In memory of Ian Dawson-Shepherd, founder of the Spastics' Society, now Scope, on 16 April in London. For details, contact Fay Holas on tel: 0171-636 5020 ext 202.

Help

Volunteers are needed for a project to give people with disabilities and/or speech difficulties, access to e-mail and the Internet. If you live in Greater London, spend a lot of time at home, and, preferably, own a computer, write to WAACIS, c/o 3 St Albans Avenue, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 8EW.

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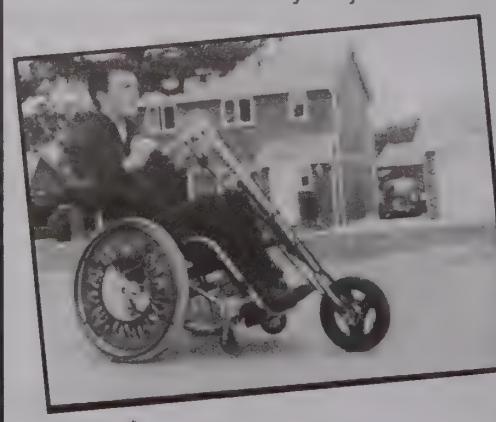
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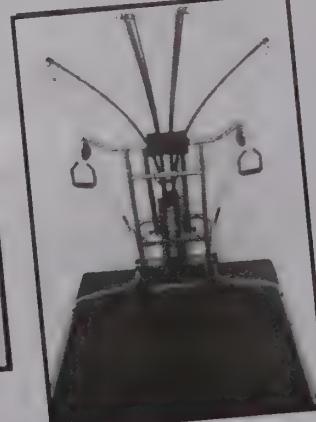
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Your stars

By DN's astrologer Marion Stanton



ARIES (21 Mar-20 Apr)

Mars is active in Aries in April making you busy at work and ardent in love. After the 8th your ardour may cool, letting you focus on organising your future.

TAURUS (21 Apr-21 May)

You are keen to develop your spiritual life and cement your earthly relationships. This month is an ideal time to begin studying or take a short break.

GEMINI (22 May-22 June)

The entry of Venus into Gemini on the 4th puts romance on the agenda. But if you are not lucky in love, you can put your energy into thinking about long term changes in your life.

CANCER (23 June-23 July)

Beware of over-indulgence in April. You could feel lucky this month, but beware of illusions.

LEO (24 July-23 Aug)

This is not the best month to convey ideas. Tensions in your love life should relax as Venus moves out of a difficult aspect to your sign around the 4th.

VIRGO (24 Aug-23 Sept)

Whether by good luck or shrewd use of opportunity, there could be financial improvements in April. Don't be blasé about it, or easy gains might slip through your fingers.

LIBRA (24 Sept-23 Oct)

Venus makes a pleasant contact with your sign this month. Light and easy romance is indicated, but beware of overspending especially on the 4th.

SCORPIO (24 Oct-22 Nov)

The Sun in Taurus opposing your sign could signify opposition from those in authority. This could be a time for achievement as long as you avoid arguments and listen to others.

SAGITTARIUS (23 Nov-21 Dec)

Some tensions may enter close relationships as Venus opposes your sign during April. This will be particularly felt in the first two weeks of the month. Try to avoid lovers' tiffs.

CAPRICORN (22 Dec-20 Jan)

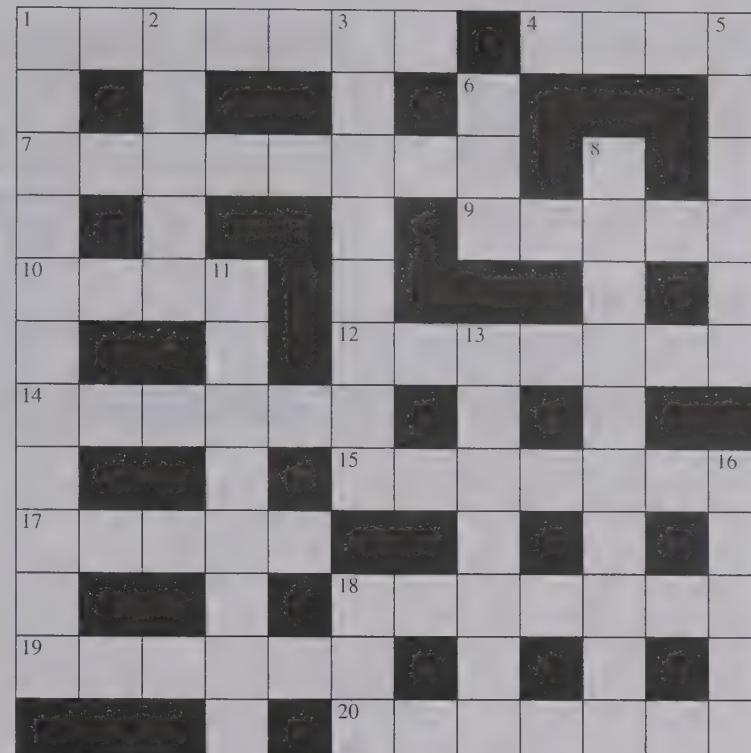
You might be feeling generous this month with a temptation to share your wisdom and resources. This is fine but make sure you have a little left over.

AQUARIUS (21 Jan-19 Feb)

There could be a battle of wills at work in April. With care you should be able to talk your way out of problems and things should be easier personally.

PISCES (20 Feb-20 Mar)

Saturn leaves Pisces in April after causing considerable tension and creating a need for practical action. There should be a little calm after the storm in your life this month.



DN's crossword

Answers on page 32

COMPILED BY REBECCA REYNOLDS

ACROSS

1. Legendary bird (7)
4. Rip or droplet (4)
7. Famous Russian (8)
9. Let in (5)
10. Speech impediment (4)
12. Be cream (anag)
14. Swamp or entanglement (6)
15. Tin stag (anag)
17. Annoyed (5)
18. Sensitive feeler (7)
19. Leg or arm support (6)
20. Female ruler (7)

DOWN

1. Disability athletics contest (11)
2. Fertile spot (5)
3. Ten tries (anag)
5. Shake (6)
6. One girl's name? (3)
8. Tie nice map (anag)
11. Natal nip (anag)
13. Put boss (anag)
16. It could be super, green or cut (5)
18. Consumed (3)

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Disability Today

Disability Today is a new monthly television programme for disabled people, their families and carers, in fact anyone who has an interest in disability issues. The programme will provide information about leisure, work, education, benefits and current issues in an accessible and entertaining format. Programmes will be screened on BBC2 at 4.45am during October through April 1996, so get your video machines ready! Check Radio Times & Ceefax for details.



Disability Today is an Open Access Programme

Win a Pisces bath lift worth £700

Do you find bathtimes bothersome? Here's your chance to make them easy with this stylish bath lift from Keep Able. One lucky reader will be able to relax in comfort with this lightweight, fully portable lift.

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The Pisces has an adjustable stabiliser bar so it will stay rigid. Suction pads on the base give a secure grip. It has a narrow, supportive, high back and a contoured seat for comfort.

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Names will be drawn from a hat. The judges' decision is final. Offer not open to *DN* staff or associates.

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Disability Now





Football misery

Send your letters to: Ann Darnbrough, Disability Now, 12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ

Dear Ann,
I would like to take up football as a hobby. However, I have a problem in that I keep having to answer the call of nature while playing. This is both embarrassing and inconvenient, especially when there are no conveniences available. What can I do?

Michael, Bracknell

So many people have a problem of this sort, and it can seriously hamper an active lifestyle. However, with good advice, a lot can be done to manage and promote continence in individuals who have this difficulty.

It is important, Michael, to seek professional help and your GP can refer you to a local continence adviser. If you have difficulties about referral, The Continence Foundation holds a list of all continence advisers and will be glad to give you the contact address of your nearest adviser.

The foundation's Continence Helpline, tel: 0191-213 0050, is open from 9am to 6pm on weekdays. It is entirely confidential and is also a good source of advice.

As for how to play sports, perhaps sporting readers who have found good solutions could write in and let me know, so that I can pass on any suggestions.

Dear Ann,
I am very lonely since I lost my wife after having been married for 52 years. We used to enjoy going on cruises together. I have tried going on my own but it's not the same.

I wonder if you can tell me how I might find a lonely woman who might enjoy such holidays? By the way, I am 89 and use an electric wheelchair.

Frank, Polgate

It is always very difficult to go on holiday alone, especially when all your previous holidays have been shared. I am sorry, Frank, but I cannot suggest a particular person who could join you on a cruise.

Have you thought of advertising in DN's "Personal" column? It only costs £3. You never know, you might find just the right person. Just fill in the form at the back of the paper. You could also consider

- love and loneliness
- bereavement
- personal problems
- advice and support

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DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick can give disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and fully accredited Methodist local preacher. Talk to her on (01708) 477582 on Thursday afternoons, 1pm-5pm and Mondays 6pm-10pm.



Sponsored by BT

Dear Ann,
I read Arthur's letter (DN December), where he challenged the disabled activists' movement, with great interest.

Come on Arthur, you're in danger of being as arrogant as the people you're criticising. You accuse disabled activists of being unrealistic and you say that anyone who doesn't hate their disability is talking through their hat.

As a blind person who has campaigned all my life for disabled people's rights, I resent the implication that anyone who doesn't hate their disability as much as you do is being dishonest or unrealistic. I do have a great deal of sympathy with what you say; I have been totally blind all my life, I have a good job and would, I think, be regarded as successful.

Yes, there are days when I resent my impairment and particularly dislike other people's attitudes towards it and me. But I don't spend my whole time wishing I was sighted. I feel for you when you say you have never seen your wife and children. I too have children and, if I got my sight back, which is extremely unlikely, I would certainly spend the first half hour looking in the mirror, at my children and at the rest of my family.

Having never known sight, unlike you, I don't feel that I miss it. Although there are things I would like to see, I often say I would like to have my sight back but stay a blind person.

I think the disability movement has been guilty, in its desire to impress on people the value of disabled people, of ignoring the very real feelings of grief and loss that some feel.

For me, I know the fulfilment of the dream I have had all my adult life, to have equal rights, will go a hell of a long way to making my life better. I can't wait for the day. Let's hope we don't have to wait much longer.

Susannah, London

The Disability Rights Handbook - you can't afford to be without it!

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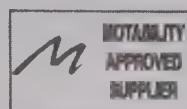
- the new Jobseeker's Allowance - which replaces unemployment benefit and income support for people who have to sign on for work.
- Incapacity Benefit
- Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance
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Price £9.95 (postfree) or £5.95 (concessionary rate for people on benefit). Send order with payment to: Disability Alliance, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA. Please allow 28 days for delivery.

Registered Charity number 273128

Thank you for sending me your views, Susannah. I am sure Arthur will appreciate them. This is a debate that will go on and on. Talking to each other can only lead to greater tolerance and understanding, and can only strengthen the disability movement.

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Every day we are bombarded with the idea that fitness is something we should be striving for. If you have a disability, it is even more important that you take some form of regular exercise, even if only to make daily living easier. This does not mean that everyone has to become an athlete.

Getting fit has not always been the easiest thing. Weight training gyms are not known for being the most physically accessible places. Some gyms that focus more on body building can be off-putting even for an experienced weight trainer, let alone a novice. Also, there can be concerns over what equipment you can use or whether staff will help you out.

The Welsh Sports Centre for the Disabled (WSCD) is the answer to a lot of these problems for people who live in south Wales, would like to do weight training to get fit and, most importantly, want to enjoy themselves.

It opened at the end of last year on the site of Cardiff Institute of Higher Education in Cyncoed, Cardiff. It came about as part of a dream by athletes Chris Hallam and John Harris that there should be somewhere better for athletes to train.

When I first went there I didn't know what to expect. Weight training has been an integral part of my overall training for five years, but finding somewhere in my area where I could do the specific exercises that I wanted for wheelchair racing was not easy.

Accessible equipment

One of the benefits of the WSCD is that the equipment, developed by Powersport and called the Guardian Integra range, is fully accessible. For me, that means I don't need to have anyone there to help me complete my training. The equipment looks like any you would find in other gyms.

The main difference is that each piece is adjustable so that if you prefer (or have no choice) you can stay in your chair to work out. Each of the machines have swing-away seats (the clips aren't too fiddly) and there are also good, wide padded straps to give extra support so that you can really go for it.

I found this particularly useful on the Pec Dec machine – an important exercise for me.

The only way I had been able to do this safely before was to have a friend put their fist in the middle of my chest to hold me on.

While there are many things that you can ask a stranger to do in the gym (for instance, pass weights), this was not really one of them.

A success of the gym, and

Spring into health

Top wheelchair athlete Tanni Grey chooses an accessible gym in Wales to help her get fit



Push yourself: Tanni checks out the WSCD's equipment HUW EVANS



On the weights: find a gym that suits you, not the other way round

something I think is vitally important, is that both able-bodied and disabled people train together, and there is more than enough room to do this. Disabled users are not relegated to another corner of the room with specialised machines.

You will find the usual steppers and rowing and running machines. Not to be left out, there are two handbikes and three sets of rollers.

One is for day chairs and the other for racing chairs. Again, this equipment has been set up so that there is very little alteration to do, all of which

can be done on the roller itself.

You can also get on and off on your own.

Friendly staff

I was impressed by the staff that work at the centre. They are all friendly and helpful (not patronising), they ask in a cheerful tone if you had a good session when you come out of the gym looking a bit peaky,

and don't split on you to your coach that the last time you were in there you ate two Twix bars when you came off the rollers!

They are also more than happy to try and set the gym up in a way that gives it the

most room. They don't make a fuss if you move things around to make it easier.

Everything else about the gym is accessible. All the toilets are just about big enough to live in, and something that I have not seen in any other gym is that, apart from the usual shower facilities, they also have a bath (in both the men's and women's changing rooms) which for me is a lot easier.

Apart from the gym, there are other facilities at the Cyncoed College site. A new indoor tennis centre is currently under construction. For what you get as part of the membership, I

believe that is extremely good value. I use the place three to five times a week.

So, if you are in south Wales, join up. If you are just passing through, why not drop in anyway and find out what you are missing?

The Wales Sports Centre for the Disabled, tel: (01222) 506777.

Tanni Grey is seeking disabled women aged 16-25 to help in a questionnaire on sports provision. If you wish to help or take part, please tel: (01222) 551111.



The Powersport Guardian Integra range is fully accessible



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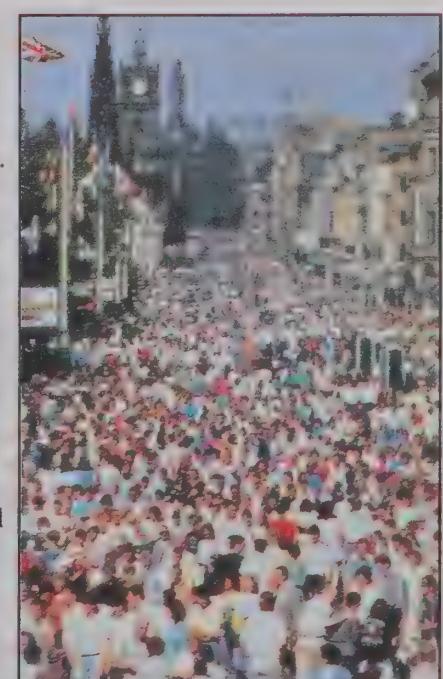
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In your DN next month

- Focus on Edinburgh: in a city famous for its festivals (right), DN finds out what disabled people have to celebrate.



- Driving forward: still north of the border, we preview what's new at the Scottish Mobility Roadshow.

- Ideal Home Exhibition: DN reviews the show. Find out whether access has improved and what's on offer for people with disabilities.

- Pensions: everything you always wanted to know... DN's benefits expert has the facts.

- A sporting chance: we look at the British Sports Association for the Disabled and other disability sports organisations.

Plus all the best in news, views, arts, sport, jobs and offers. On sale 30 April.

Info

Blindness: the facts is a new leaflet from the Royal National Institute for the Blind. It contains basic information for anyone who would like to know more about visual impairment. £1 per copy or £7.50 for ten copies from RNIB Customer Services Department, PO Box 173, Peterborough PE2 6WS, tel: (0345) 023153.

The Mike Heaffey Centre, created and supported by the Association for Spinal Injury, Research, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (ASPIRE), has launched a concessionary entry scheme. The Passport to Leisure Plus One makes classes more affordable and you can take a friend along for the same rate. Qualification is automatic for anyone registered disabled. ASPIRE, Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Broomley Hill, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 4LP, tel: 0181-954 0701.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995: a guide for local authorities, £15, is available from the Local Government Information Unit, 1-5 Bath Street, London EC1V 9QQ, tel: 0171-608 1051.

The University of Bradford has produced an access guide for its disabled students. Available in print, braille, audio tape and computer disk from the Disability Office, University of Bradford, Richmond Road, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD7 1DP, tel/minicom: (01274) 383739.

Starting Out: a rough guide to independent living on Tyneside is aimed at young disabled people in the area who are thinking of going it alone for the first time. It gives information about personal assistants, money matters, work, health, relationships, training and education, and more. Available from Disability Action North East, John Haswell House, 8-9 Gladstone Terrace, Gateshead NE8 4DY, tel: 0191-490 1099, minicom: 0191-478 4082.

Appointments

David Pollock is the new director of the Continence Foundation. He was formerly director of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). Claire Mallinson has been appointed to the new post of head of voluntary fundraising at Scope. David Kay is the new finance director at the Leonard Cheshire Foundation, the UK's largest provider of care and services for disabled people.

Personal

MALE, 26, WITH cp would like to meet lady 18-30 preferably living in Essex or London for friendship, hopefully leading to romance. I have a good sense of humour and enjoy cinema, restaurants, clubs and pubs. All replies will be answered. Box No. 892

WEST INDIAN MALE, 33, with cp would like to meet female aged 30-40 for friendship, hopefully leading to relationship. I am fun, sincere and honest. I enjoy the pub, cinema and computers. Disability, size or nationality unimportant. Box No. 893

VISUALLY IMPAIRED, HAPPY, colourful, arty but smart, professional man aged 36 needs an easygoing but steady permanent relationship. Going, going, gone. Sold to the 28-35ish woman on the left. Collection ASAP in the east London area. Can travel. Box No. 894

50-YEAR-OLD WOMAN with cp. Wheelchair user. Supported in a house shared with another lady. Seeks male penpal or friend, 40 years and above. I'm in south London and want someone from London only. I like the theatre. Box No. 895

25-YEAR-OLD MALE with cp. Mobile, outgoing with many interests. A self-employed desktop publisher and litho printer working from home. I would like to meet a lady with view to friendship and maybe relationship. Box No. 896

DISABLED MAN AGED 46, living in north London. Has asthma and scoliosis (spinal curvature). Seeks kind, caring, sincere lady, 30-40, for friendship, possibly lasting relationship. Though I drive, I would prefer to meet someone from London or the home counties. Box No. 897

GAY PARAPLEGIC GUY, ex-biker, now riding three and four wheel all-terrain cycles. Seeks others. Box No. 898

ATTRACTIVE, INTELLIGENT LADY, 50 plus. Uses cane. Living in Birmingham. Would like to contact musical, personable, educated, mobile gentleman. All communication treated courteously. Box No. 899

MIDLANDS-BASED MALE tetraplegic in his 30s. Seeks able-bodied female companion/helper to accompany him on holiday, possibly abroad. I'm confident, clean living with a healthy outlook. If you are single, between 28-35 and looking to do something different this year, please write with photo, details etc. Driving licence an advantage. Would assist financially. Genuine replies only please. Box No. 900

33-YEAR-OLD SINGLE female seeks male and female friends. I have a good sense of humour, am a bit of a live wire and am often described as attractive. I am also witty and enjoy socialising. My interests are varied, including swimming, music and antiques. I work and have my own home. Oops, before I forget, I also have a disability. Box No. 901

MALE, 50, SEEKS happy, contented and intimate relationship with an understanding woman. Commitment more important than age. Box No. 902

SINGLE CHRISTIAN MALE, 40, wheelchair

user, own car, who enjoys swimming, photography, travelling, music, would like to hear from single females, 30-40, physically disabled or understanding able-bodied, in south west Wales/Avon area for companionship. Box No. 903

EX MANCHURIAN, travelled the world to end up in Milton Keynes but not for anything too serious. Mid 50s and that could be my waist. Ability, race, gender, sexuality, or whatever, I've hopefully got no prejudices. I'd like a penfriend (minicom, fax etc. are a possibility) or if you have a strong stomach a closer relationship. Go on, give it a go. It's got to be better than the lottery. At least I'll reply to every letter. Box No. 904

LONELY 33-YEAR-OLD BACHELOR. Enjoys driving, swimming. Own home/car. Leg disability. Would like to meet a lady for friendship/relationship. Box No. 905

GRADUATE, 37, CARING, optimistic, good listener, financially secure, great sense of fun, slightly disabled. Would like to meet a lady 27 plus with sense of romance for loving relationship. Box No. 906

DISABLED GAY MALE with ms. 5ft 6in, slim build with brown eyes, would like gay penfriend with possibility of close friendship. I have a very young outlook on life. I love music, driving and life. Your disability is no problem. Include telephone number if possible. Privacy and discretion assured. Box No. 907

SINCERE GENTLEMAN, 60. Slim build, 5ft 10in tall, young looking, very slightly disabled, caring, romantic, light smoker. Interests include tv, music, home life, gardening, DIY, outings, countryside. Seeks female who is sincere, caring and romantic. Age not important, I have a nice home to share with some kind lady in a lasting relationship, possibly marriage. Photo if possible please. All letters answered. South west Scotland. Box No. 908

MALE, 40, SEEKS female same age as a penpal. Lonely? Then lets be lonely together. Good sense of humour, not religious, into life, the universe and everything. I use a walking stick. Box No. 909

LADY WHO IS hard of hearing wishes to hear from anyone who has had an operation for osteosclerosis. Box No. 910

For sale

VAUXHALL ASTRA STATESMAN. Jan 1991. 18,000 miles only. MOT Jan 1997. Fitted with lowering suspension for easy rear access for wheelchair passenger. Excellent condition. Sale due to bereavement. £6,000. Tel: (01604) 751623.

SUNGIFT 400 1992. Used for less than a year. Recently serviced. Excellent condition. £1,375. Tel: (01392) 841395.

NISSAN VANETTE VERSA K reg. 18,000 miles. Access via rear ramps. One owner. Seats five plus wheelchair. Very good condition. £6,750. Tel: (01202) 744219 (east Dorset).

ADJUSTAMATIC ELECTRIC BED with massage. £500 ono. Tel: (01492) 581983.

ELECTRIC RECLINING CHAIR for disabled person. Heating vibrating pads. Brown velvet. Cost £1,700. Bargain £500. Tel: (01494) 436628.

TAIL LIFT, RATCLIFFE make. 250kg. Will suit minibus etc. Any offer considered. Tel: 0181-715 5828.

WHEELCHAIR LIFT, MINIVATOR. Vertical type. As new. Offers over £500. Tel: 0121-681 9243.

WHEELCHAIR POWER PACK. Purchased July 1995. £275 ono. Tel: (01253) 591954.

POWERTEC F40 ELECTRIC wheelchair. Elevating footrests, battery, charger. As new. £1,200 ono. Tel: 0181-651 5127.

FORD ESCORT CHAIRMAN. Ex-Gowrings. Hydraulic lowering system. Rear wheelchair access. £6,500. After 6pm. Tel: (01480) 216320.

PARKER CARE POWER reclining arm chair. Electrically operated. £250. Tel: (01223) 358666.

INTABILITY 200 CHAIR lift. Was fitted to 1990 VW Transporter. Very good condition. £700 ono. Tel: (01934) 863340 or 863211.

GO EVERYWHERE FOUR wheel buggy. As new. £900. Tel: (01252) 715435.

ORTHOKINETIC LIFT CHAIR. £500. Roho chair cushion £200. 1993 Booster Town and Country scooter £1,300 ono. Tel: (01908) 505204.

VAUXHALL ASTRA GLSI. Five door hatchback 1993. £7,250. Automatic power assisted steering. Hand controls. Seat lift. Rear hoist for wheelchair/scooter. Alarm. Autolocking. 26,000 miles. Tel: (01372) 363482 (Leatherhead).

NISSAN VANETTE 2.3 diesel. M reg. Vision ramp, power winch, three rear seats, full wheelchair anchorage, sun roof, stereo cassette, four speakers, 12,000 miles. Warranty May 1998. £10,950. Tel: (01789) 292556.

NISSAN PRAIRIE CAR chair 1992. 18,000 miles. Wheelchair and lift system for front passenger position. £9,000. Tel: 0181-668 2646.

POWERTEC F50 WHEELCHAIR, as new, hardly used. £1,295. Tel: 0181-542 1060.

LIBERTY ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR. Excellent condition. £475. Tel: 0181-542 1060.

BOOSTER TETRA FOUR-WHEEL. In good condition. Price £900. Can be seen in Oxford. Tel: (01865) 513168.

ADJUSTAMATIC ELECTRIC BED with fitted loose cover. Fully adjustable with vibrator for muscular pain. Brand new condition. Will sell for £950. Tel: (01792) 740406.

STERLING XL MODEL three wheel mobility scooter. As new. In perfect condition. Battery operated with charger, pump and weather cover. Cost £2,185. Will sell for £1,400. Tel: 0171-272 1583.

THERAPOSTURE BED. Very good condition. Over £2,000 new. £950 ono. Buyer collects. Tel: 0181-566 9080.

SUNGIFT 600 1994. Two years remaining on warranty. Long range battery. Off vehicle charger. Cost new £4,063. Accept £1,500. Tel: (01527) 872556.

TETRA FOUR-WHEEL kerb climbing scooter. Road/pavement. As new (Sept 1994). Includes battery charger. Cost £2,300. Accept £1,695 ono. Tel: Jenny on 0171-837 7618 (daytime) or 0171-277 7745 (evenings).

DYNAVOX SST. £3,500 ono. Very new. Used a couple of times. Tel: 0181-289 2055.

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NAISH ESTATE, New Milton, Hampshire. Fully equipped, completely wheelchair accessible, two-bedroom bungalow. Sleeps six. Site near sea with access to New Forest, Bournemouth. Excellent site facilities 100 yards from Chalet. Details, Mr P Cash, tel: (01425) 672055.

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For brochure contact
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Courtlay 79440, Deux Sevres, France,
tel (0033) 49.72.25.37.

English contact no. 01395 267084

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Recruitment

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The Bank of England has vacancies on its NETWORK Training Programme. This training will lead to a NVQ qualification in Administration and a Certificate in Information Technology.

Applicants ideally should be 16 and leaving full-time education this year. No specific qualifications are required.

For further details and an application form, apply in writing to

Personnel Division (BB-1)

Bank of England,

1 and 2 Bank Buildings

Princes Street, London EC2R 8EU

The closing date for enquiries is **26 April 1996**

The Bank of England is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

BANK OF ENGLAND

**D.I.A.R.Y. and
South Somerset
Advocacy Scheme**

Has been successful in obtaining a National Lottery Charities Board grant and requires
Two Mature Advocacy Development Officers

30 hours per week, 3 year fixed term contract. Salary circa £13,000 pro rata.

* The successful candidates will be responsible for giving information, advice and advocacy to people with disabilities in the South Somerset area.

* Candidates should have the use of own reliable transport.

* A keen awareness of disability and the experience to effectively promote the needs of disabled people is essential.

* Good communication skills are required and knowledge of appropriate support systems would be an advantage.

* Candidates must be computer literate.

Application forms and further details are available from

Sue Creighton, D.I.A.R.Y.; 103a Highfield Road, Yeovil, BA21 4RJ.

Telephone: (01935) 33055.

Fax: (01935) 411820. Minicom: (01935) 33055.

Closing date for application forms: 30/4/96.

D.I.A.R.Y. is an equal opportunities employer.

**PROJECT DEVELOPMENT OFFICER,
REDBRIDGE**

up to £19,192 inc.

(10 months fixed term contract)

The RNID is the largest voluntary organisation providing quality services to deaf, deaf blind and hard of hearing people.

We are currently setting up a new project to develop services for deaf and blind people in the London Borough of Redbridge. The main aim is to develop an accessible service and information centre in Redbridge by spring 1997.

A self starter with excellent communication skills is required to lead this project and meet this objective. Your role will include establishing contacts, conducting research and consultation with potential partners and users, writing reports and presenting information at public meetings.

A good understanding of the needs of deaf and blind people is important as is experience in conducting research and consultation exercises.

If you are able to work with minimum supervision this could be an exciting opportunity for you.

For further details and an application form contact:

Human Resources Division

RNID, South East, 39 Store Street

London WC1E 7DB. Tel: 0171 916 4245 (24 hr voice)

0171 813 2267 (24hr minicom)

Closing date: 9.4.96

The RNID is working towards equal opportunities.

(Registered Charity No. 207720)

Courses**APPROVED PRACTICE
TEACHING
PROGRAMME**

North West (North)
Consortium

Applications are invited from qualified Social Workers with at least two years post qualifying experience.

Bursaries may be available in exceptional circumstances.

Closing date: 9 May 1996.

For further information and application forms please contact Programme Administrator, Department of Social Work.

**University of Central
Lancashire,
Preston PR1 2HE**
Tel: 01772 893475



**UNIVERSITY
OF CENTRAL
LANCASHIRE**



**University of
Hertfordshire**

School of Art & Design

LECTURER

REF: P1316D

Division of Art and Arts Therapies

Initially one year appointment. Salary - £13,593 - £22,331

We are looking for an individual experienced in teaching or training to lead the development and delivery of the Disability, Arts, Training and Employment (DATE) programme in the School of Art and Design.

The School, which has a tradition of providing courses in the Arts Therapies, is being supported by the European Social Fund to run transnational training using art and dramatherapy for trainers involved in fields related to people with disabilities and employment.

You will have responsibility for course planning, preparing trainers, publicity, recruitment and transnational coordination among other duties you will have experience of project/team coordination and creation of learning materials, probably in the field of advocacy or self-advocacy with personal experience of disability.

ADMINISTRATOR

REF: P3857D

Disability, Arts, Training and Employment Project (DATE)
Initially one year appointment. Salary £11,455 - £12,396

We require an experienced administrator to work with a small project team and provide administrative support with minimal supervision. Ideally you will have all round IT skills (word-processing, database/spreadsheet) and be enthusiastic about developing and maintaining computer based records. Financial records are involved and you should therefore be numerate and willing to work with figures.

You will be an integral part of a small team developing and running a specialised training programme for people involved in fields of work related to disabled people and employment. The training, for which the School has been supported by the European Social Fund, aims to provide skills in running art and drama workshops linked to advocacy, empowerment and employment.

Applicants with personal experience of disability are encouraged. Experience within education, administering project work or working on an international basis would be an advantage.

Applicants with any queries about these positions or about support for applicants with disabilities may contact Phil Stuhldreer on (01707) 284002.

Further details for the above posts from the Personnel Department, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield AL10 9AB or tel: 01707 284802 (24 hour answerphone) quoting appropriate ref. no. **Closing date: 26 April 1996.**

The University is an Equal Opportunities Employer

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TO THE FURTHERANCE OF EDUCATION**

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Opportunities
at Raglan
Housing
Association**

If you are interested in working for Raglan and in finding out more details about any current or future vacancies, please write to the Personnel Officer, Wright House, 12-14 Castle Street, Poole, Dorset BH15 1BQ.

Please state the type of position you are interested in.

We may not have any vacancies at present but we will be pleased to keep your details on file and contact you if the type of vacancy you are interested in arises.

You can see job advertisements in your local newspapers or in specialist journals such as Inside Housing or HA Weekly.

The Association is an Equal Opportunities Employer. We welcome applications from suitably qualified and experienced people, regardless of race, gender, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation.

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Detailed C.V. to:
Linda Hinks, Human Resource Manager,
Sunrise Medical Ltd.,
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For details and an application pack please contact:

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Telephone: 0117 9839839 (Voice and Minicom)

Closing date: Friday 19th April 1996

WECL is aiming to be an equal opportunities employer and particularly welcomes applications from Black Disabled people.

**RIGHTS SUPPORT WORKER**

Salary: NJC Scale S01 £16,575-£17,667

DIAL UK is the national organisation for a network of advice centres run by and for disabled people. We are seeking an experienced Welfare Rights Worker to provide information, telephone support and some training to advise workers in DIAL disability advice centres across the UK. This post is part of a three-year project funded by the National Lottery Charities Board.

Applications are invited from any candidate with relevant experience but candidates with disabilities are particularly encouraged to apply. Job share applicants will be considered.

For a job application pack please contact the Director, DIAL UK, Park Lodge, St Catherine's Hospital, Tickhill Road, Doncaster DN4 8QN. Tel: (01302) 310123.

Closing date: 29 April 1996

Interviews: 15 May 1996

ASSETS COMMUNICATION

(part of the Deaf@X Trust. Registered Charity No. 326799)

MANAGER

Applications are invited from people with disabilities preferably other than deafness.

Salary: Circa £17,000 per annum

Fixed term Contract for one year with possible extension for a further two years.

Assets Communication is advancing Support Services, Education, Training and Skills for both children and adults with disabilities and those that work with them professionally.

We are looking for a person to be responsible to the Director in managing and co-ordinating a number of its present activities and personnel; and also developing contracts on a surplus generating basis concerned with disability awareness and training.

For further information contact: **Ken Carter, Assets Communication, BG28, Bulmershe Court, The University, Reading, Berks, RG6 1HY. Tel: 01734 351936 (Voice/Minicom/Anaphone). Fax: 01491 571688. E-Mail 100604.2212@compuserve.com**

Publications

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Based in Tblisi, Georgia

1 year contract

Grade 12

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Concerns around the area of disability and disability rights has attracted funding from Oxfam in partnership with NOVIB (a member of Oxfam International). This post will initiate the process of collaboration of different groups in the region (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) to prioritise the top issues affecting disabled people and develop a disability programme. This will be accomplished through the capacity to support and train local staff and participate actively in local NGO development and co-ordination.

Proven expertise of working with organisations of disabled people, an understanding of social attitudes towards disability and the importance of gender awareness in relation to disability issues are

essential. As is previous overseas work experience; the ability to communicate at all levels; initiative and resourcefulness in coping with pressure, difficult circumstances and with limited external support; team working skills, and an awareness of the needs of both colleagues and project partners.

Oxfam particularly welcomes applications from disabled people.

For further details and an application form, please send a large SAE to:

International Human Resources, OXFAM, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 7DZ or fax to 01865 313819, quoting job title and reference number: OS/RDA/C/HM/DN. Closing date for completed applications by 9am on 22 April 1996. Interview date: TBA.



Working for a Fairer World

Oxfam UK/Ireland is striving to be an equal opportunity employer

Disability Now

£1.40 April 1996

The award winning newspaper for everyone with an interest in disability

Contact lens scare

Contact lens wearers who rinse their lens containers using the bathroom cold tap are running the risk of eye damage, warns an eye expert. Story overleaf.



Incontinence

How mums can cope without embarrassment



Lick of time: Innis the labrador retriever guide dog poses with Martin Berry, 30, from Luton. Innis woke Martin by licking his face when he was overcome by fumes from his gas cooker.

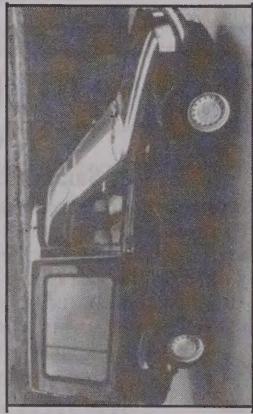
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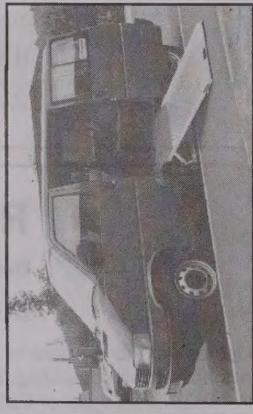
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